No. 229 / MARCH 1992

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST

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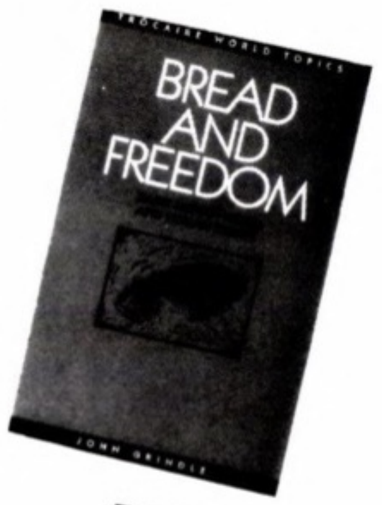

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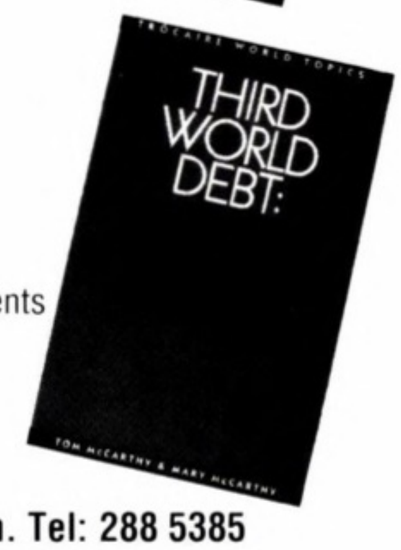

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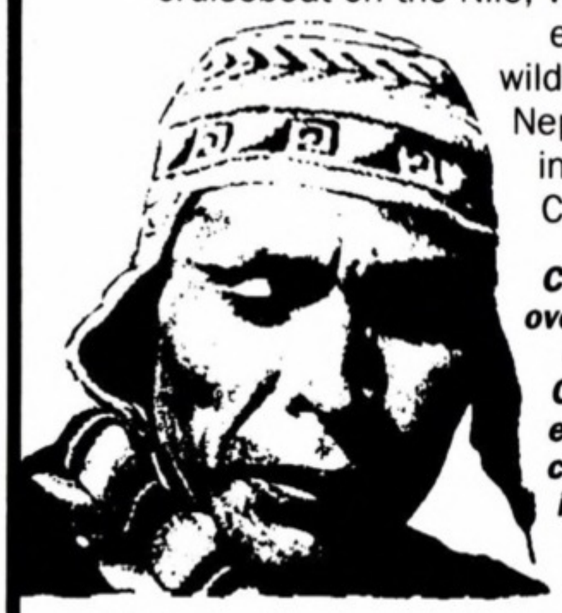

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Our printers advise us that around 50 copies of the February NI on Oxfam were printed with black lines obscuring parts of pages 12 and 13. If you received one of these please return the magazine to us at NI, FREEPOST, Oxford OX4 1BR and we will send you a replacement.

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FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION: **HECTOR CATTOLICA**

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Human Rights

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

'YES,' said Vanessa a bit doubtfully. 'I do like it, but I'm not quite sure about the face.' We were poring over the image of the Olympic runner which had been drawn for the front cover of this magazine.

We studied the picture carefully. The decision to commission the illustration had seemed entirely clear-cut when we first saw the rough sketches. But the image had suddenly become ambiguous as we saw it for a moment through another editor's eyes.

Certainly the runner's face has a kind of fierce desperation about it which gives it an edge. 'And that is what I like,' said Chris, who was helping me produce this magazine. He was clasping his head in his hands, wrestling with the doubt that had crept into his mind. *(Actually I was just thinking 'is nothing ever easy in this place?' - Chris)*

Both he and I were trying to assess how you, the readers, would view the image. Would you, like us, relish its subtlety, recognizing that it is hard these days to see the Statue of Liberty as an unambiguous symbol of goodness? Or would you simply find the runner's face disturbing and wonder what on earth we meant by it? The answer meant the difference between keeping the face the same or making changes.

Part of an editor's responsibility is to ensure that sentences and images communicate what is intended and are not misunderstood. But sometimes you need to listen to others. So we did what people here often do when there is a question-mark over a decision – we canvassed other people's opinions.

Recognizing the value of consultation is one of the advantages of working in a co-operative. The reason we have open-plan offices is so that we can eavesdrop on each other's conversations and chip in when we have something to add. And often in the middle of a day editors or designers will approach one another and ask: 'What do you think of this?' about the lay-out of a page or a T-shirt design.

Sometimes when the decision over which photograph to choose for the front cover is proving particularly tricky, everybody stops work to gather around the slide projector and offer their point of view. This tried and tested method has proved repeatedly that many minds are better than one.

On this particular occasion, however, half the co-op were for the face, and half against. The ball was back in our court. So we decided to keep the drawing the same. We liked the image as a whole because it made this magazine easily identifiable as a sibling to the first Human Rights Olympics issue we produced in 1988 – the same artist, Argentinian Hector Cattolica, was responsible for both. And we chose the image then because it seemed like a poignant symbol of the importance of keeping human rights standards alive; of representing the very best that human beings have to offer.

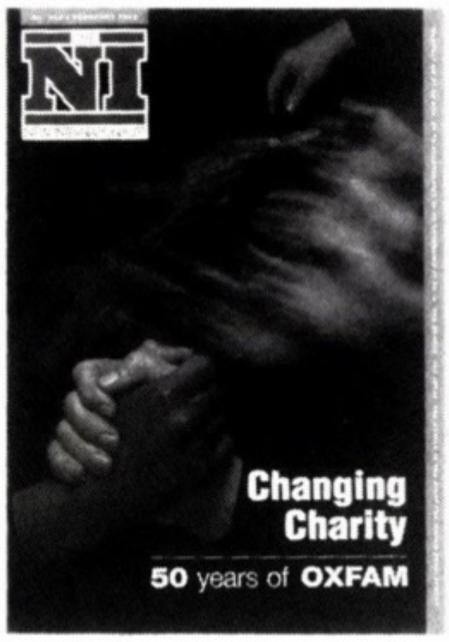
Since that last magazine the idea of 'human rights' has been at the centre of an extraordinary transformation in the world order. In a very real sense the front-cover image is right – it has set the world aflame. Human rights are (ahem) a burning issue of our times.

Sue Shaw

Sue Shaw
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

Raising funds not hell

The profile of a charity in crisis by Sue Montgomery (**NI 228**) is old and dirty news. Changes have been made to deal more effectively with how staff handle funds and the images used to



raise support. Oxfam-Québec fundraising techniques are definitely out of the mainstream but there is nothing 'crass' – we really resent the term – in the use of innovative techniques to access new types of financial supporters. Many in the NGO community have inquired about our golf tournaments (including Oxfam America).

We do not have to justify our approach, our fundraising techniques or our advertising strategies. They are not illegal or immoral and should be questioned and criticized only if impeding our relationship with our partners and donors. Did Ms Montgomery ever talk to them?

Out of the first 72 lines of her article, only 4 talk about our work overseas which – Sue Montgomery mentions – 'is less in question'. Overseas programs are our raison d'être! No business succeeds without increasing its productivity and productivity simply cannot increase without upgrading and concentrating on innovation. That is exactly why Oxfam-Québec has been able to allocate $20 million for development projects in the past five years.

Finally, the real scandal in this article is the use of unnamed parties to make an inflammatory and accusatory comment – which is journalistically highly unethical.

At Oxfam-Québec we have learned to think positive and we apply this principle every living day (not all used cars are lemons).

Gaston Truchon
Executive Director, OXFAM-Québec

VIV QUILLIN

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Feminist unions

Although we bear the scars of successive macho Tory governments, the prospects for UK feminists in 1992 are not all bad (*We've only just begun* **NI 227**). Though British trade unions have never been renowned for progressive attitudes towards women, their prejudices are gradually being eroded. Virtually every union now has an equality officer responsible for the rights of both women and ethnic minorities. All devote space to questions of equal job opportunities for women, equal pay, sexual harassment and child care at work. There's a long way to go, but in the UK trade-union movement at least there is some evidence of change.

John Arnold
Maidstone, UK

Damning Bly

Erica Simmons writes that because Bly's 'masculinist' movement is still in its infancy and apolitical on principle, it may be slightly unfair to attack it on political grounds' (**NI 227**). Not at all. Social movements which claim to be apolitical are always reactionary and should be identified as such. Bly's 'mythopoetic' approach is at best romanticist garbage and at worst an attempt to reassert male supremacy.

It is seductive only because it appears to offer an easy escape for men. What they really need to understand is that there can be no escape from their domestic and other human responsibilities.

Peter Somerville
Manchester, UK

Don't patronize me

Tom Tunney's praise of Arthur Seaton, the 'hero' of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, is insulting and somewhat out of place in an issue of **NI** focusing on feminism (**NI 227**). Seaton is a despicable character who regards women as existing for men's pleasure and who plays dirty tricks on a fellow worker. I come from a working-class socialist family, where this kind of behaviour was not practised or condoned.

Kathleen Jones
Bishops Castle, UK

Equal rights

I was disappointed that your feminism issue (**NI 227**) failed to rise above the useless call of equal rights for women. I am a male feminist because it is clear that men can only develop a free, peaceful, cultured social life if women take their rightful place. But that is not equal rights.

These are a biological impossibility. A few seconds of enjoyable activity by a male can condemn a female to years of nurturing the resulting child. And running a home in this country is a technical business; it is inefficient and stupid to dilute responsibility.

Only one person can ensure that bread is available or that the machine and dishwasher are utilised to the optimum degree. Agreed, this person can be male, thus freeing the female. But that is not equal rights.

Forget these. Concentrate instead on ensuring that homo sapiens learn to live peaceful, unselfish, co-operative lives in harmony with the rest of nature.

R G Sargent
Cornwall, UK

Bending rules

In case anyone looking at page 24 of your January issue (**NI 227**) thinks that one of (British socialist) Tony Benn's seventeenth-century ancestors was a notable feminist, may I point out that the lady in question was Aphra Amis, who married a Mr *Behn* not Benn.

Eileen Davies
Oxford, UK

Kind killing

In response to two letters in **NI 226** (*Feeding the Few* and *Meat Greedy*), there are vast acreages of farmed land where the only 'crop' that grows is grass. Surely it is still ethically sound for us (yes, I am a farmer) to produce meat from our hills and uplands – providing we do it humanely – rather than let the land go, and put ourselves out of work?

If your correspondents are as 'affluent' as Rob Preston and Jane Ashworth suggest, it is perfectly possible to demand meat which is not produced by 'cruel, environmentally-damaging intensive-farming methods'.

Joyce Hunter Blair
Carsphairn, Scotland, UK

Patient planting

If they are sinking 200 water wells in the Sahara, (*Updates* **NI 226**), it would make sense to irrigate several square kilometres around each plant and tend trees and be patient until they attract the vital rain; then plant more trees and vegetation, and slowly reclaim this huge desert. Such action might save our planet from other human degradations.

Arnold Fullerton
Devizes, UK

Crossed wires

I am very interested in some of the facts given about Christopher Columbus in **NI 226**, as they differ significantly from those in Washington Irving's *Life of Columbus* published in 1831, and I wonder where the additional scholarship has come from.

You state that Columbus was born in Genoa in 1451, the son of a weaver, and that he was rootless. However Irving suggests that he was born in 1435, the son of a wool-comber and that he had a settled early life. You give his only son as Diego, Irving says Fernando.

Finally Irving gives his first voyage as being a naval expedition in 1459, but by your account he would only have been eight years old then.

TS Crosby
Rickmansworth, UK

The issue editor replies: Our facts derive largely from Kirkpatrick Sale's *The Conquest of Paradise* ***(Knopf 1990) and Hans Koning's*** Columbus: His Enterprise Exploding the Myth **(Monthly Review Press and Latin America Bureau 1991).**

Columbus support

I was disappointed that your Columbus issue **(NI 226)** didn't list some of the Minority Rights Group's publications, as I think they would be of particular interest to **NI** readers – especially our new education pack: *We have always lived here: The Maya of Guatemala* and our report *The Maya of Guatemala*. Our address is: 379 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE.

Rachel Warner
London, UK

Beans initiative

I wish your issue on food (NI 225) had provided recipes for the dishes described.

I am encouraging some young people to cook creatively with corn and soya beans and it would be nice to have some specific ideas.

What did people cook during the depression – or during wartime shortages? This could be invaluable information for those on low incomes.

James D. Reeb
Leamington, Ontario, Canada

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

L E T T E R F R O M **I N D I A**

Restructuring the poor

India is poised to take a big step which could grind the country's poor into the dirt, believes ***Mari Marcel Thekaekara****.*

As we enter 1992, the Indian Government threatens – our politicians use the word 'promises' – to take the country away from socialism, independence and sovereignty. Everything in fact, that our forebears fought for to free India from colonialism.

We are about to sign ominous agreements for yet another round of International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans. Already they have started to 'advise' us about our economic policy, telling us gently what we can and cannot do.

The structural reforms will involve a three-pronged attack. First, there is the inevitable devaluation of currency; we have complied twice in the last year, since the loan negotiations began.

Next there is the liberalization of the economy. For this read: 'Encourage free trade. Allow in multinationals. Let growth begin.' Our Government is already busy assuring everybody that India wants to welcome foreign investment with open arms.

The third and most lethal demand is to cut subsidies. This hits the poor where it hurts most – in the stomach. India has ration shops where poor people buy rice, sugar, wheat and a minimum supply of kerosene oil at a subsidized rate. The rice is such poor quality that no-one except a very poor person would eat it. Yet the Government has announced that the ration shops are to be 'reformed'. Although our Prime Minister claims to be committed to looking after the poor, he defends the 30-per-cent hike in the price of rice and wheat which are the staple and often only diet of the poorest.

It is not as if we are stepping into unknown territory. Countries that have followed IMF and World Bank orders for structural adjustment have generally got into a worse mess than they were in to begin with. Unemployment, debt and crime have spiralled frighteningly in a host of African countries which have undergone adjustment. Yet we have chosen to follow the same path.

Not everyone is pessimistic about the direction the country is taking. There is a consumer boom, and everyone who can is visiting TV and video parlours, or buying electronic appliances. Indians who return from the West remark at the number of new cars on our roads. Our major cities have a plethora of fast-food eating places. A whole lot of people out there are spending more money than they have ever done before.

But what these people do not see is that 80 per cent of people in India will never use a washing machine, a food processor or a computer; will never see the inside of a burger joint or an ice cream parlour; will never own a video cassette recorder.

For these people life has got worse, not better. They do not have a one room hut of their own, their kids will never go to school. Even more serious, their children may not reach adulthood.

The nutritional intake of the poorest has dramatically declined as prices of basic foods have

CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

rocketed; the poor person's only protein base are pulses and dals, the cost of which have trebled in the last couple of years, as have edible oils. This means more malnourished children, more health problems and a worsening of the quality of life for most of our population. Yet the country is said to have 'progressed'.

It is fashionable at the moment to pronounce that the country's economy made IMF negotiations inevitable. However a host of Indian economists including Dr Ashok Mitra (who used to write this column) demand to know why we, one of the world's poorest nations, are currently importing over three billion US dollars' worth of defence equipment annually when our annual budget deficit is up to five billion dollars. Couldn't we reduce our defence expenditure to help our economy?

The last decade has seen much pandering to the middle class to buy their votes. This is why we are experiencing a consumer boom even though the economy is in a shambles. Of course everyone emphasizes that the rich and middle classes must make sacrifices, must realize that the poor cannot afford to cut back anymore. This point has been reiterated by pro- and anti-IMF advocates, and by politicians of every party. But the New Year starts with a bad omen. Rice and wheat will cost 30 per cent more. For the poor, it is belt-tightening time again. ■

Mari Marcel Thekaekara has been working for the last eight years on a project she and her husband started for native people in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Running for Rights

ILLUSTRATION / HECTOR CATTOLICA

A hunger for fairer societies is transforming the world faster than ever before. But what is the price of freedom? asks ***Sue Shaw.***

BERLIN, New Year's Eve, 1989. The clinking of hammers and chisels could be heard half a mile away as, oblivious to the *verboten* signs, souvenir-seekers hacked out pieces of the Berlin Wall. A euphoric crowd massed either side of the Brandenburg Gate; grandparents scrambled atop the Wall beside their grandchildren; strangers embraced; tourists gazed at the miraculous spectacle of guards handing out chunks of wall and posing to have their photos taken.

The clock struck twelve. The crowd went mad. Firecrackers exploded, champagne bottles fountained, people danced and cheered and wept with joy. The new decade began.

Since the **NI** last covered the issue of human rights in 1988, the world has been transformed. The state of emergency was lifted in South Africa and Nelson Mandela walked free; there has been a revolution in Eastern Europe; in Africa and Latin America dictatorships have fallen to multi-party democracy or look set to do so; and the Soviet Union has collapsed.

Today everyone is talking about human rights, and divides that have gaped since you and I can remember are being bridged. Like the debate that existed over what a human right was. Traditionally Western governments assumed that human rights were mostly synonymous with multi-party elections, freedom of speech and assembly, while in the Soviet Union they meant having enough to eat, a place to live, decent

HELDUR NETOCNY / PANOS

Armed force: the South's combined Gross Domestic Product is 15 per cent of the North's but it buys 75 per cent of the arms traded every year. Many of the world's poorest countries spend two or three times as much on arms as on health or education.

health care, education, and so on.

Both sets of rights – civil and political, and economic, social and cultural – were given equal status in international human-rights treaties after World War Two. But East and West remained polarized. President Reagan demanded the release of political dissidents in the Soviet Union, while Mr Gorbachev reflected sadly on the failure of Western governments to provide full employment for their people.

Of course the poor have always known that rights like food and health care were as essential to life and well-being as having freedom of speech. But only recently have the two definitions of rights been considered interdependent.

Over the past few years politicians and policy-makers have gradually been accepting that all human rights are of equal value and inextricably entwined. A good example of this is the way that press freedom can interact with the fight against famine.

Take India. Although one of the poorest countries in the world, its relatively free press ensures that the Government cannot easily hide failures in food distribution. By comparison the absence of a free press in Sudan means food shortages are disguised until it is too late and famine has already struck.[1]

As ideas about human rights have changed, so human-rights groups and development agencies have begun to work together. The UN now places freedom high on its list of conditions necessary for human development. Governments in Africa, too, are taking the new agenda seriously – by drawing up an African human-rights charter, and by accepting a convention on children's rights.

Out of the hue and cry for freedom a new concept of citizenship is being born which places the individual first. If citizens have clearly defined rights, like those in UN treaties, then governments are under greater pressure to honour them.

Television and radio are powerful allies to the people in this respect. Thanks to monitoring by human-rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, images and reports of atrocities can be flashed across the world within minutes of the abuse being committed. Remember that single student standing courageously in front of a row of Chinese tanks in Beijing? Or those heart-rending pictures of the Kurds freezing to death in the mountains after the Gulf War?

Once the secret is out, the international community is united in expressing its justifiable disapproval. And what better way than by hitting repressive regimes where it hurts – in their pockets. Donors are taking a lead by increasingly making aid, credit and other financial benefits conditional on governments improving their human-rights records.

This trend has undoubtedly fuelled the spread of multi-party democracy which has swept across the frontiers of states and continents, kindling the hope of a fairer society in millions who for decades have lived under the shadow of military and one-party rule.

The number of countries to throw off oppressive rule in the past few years is unequalled in history: Poland, East Germany, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria – along with most countries in South America including Chile; Benin, Namibia and Zambia are now multi-party democracies while the promise of the ballot box looms large also for African countries like Angola, Gabon, the Ivory Coast, Nigeria – maybe one day soon even South Africa. And unless the shadow of totalitarianism falls again, many emerging republics in the former Soviet Union will soon be multi-party states.

Today 630 million more people embrace democracy than in 1986.[2] The combined populations of China, Indonesia and Vietnam account for 40 per cent of humanity and, should they also change, 75 per cent of the world's people would be

MAGGIE MURRAY / FORMAT

Jubilation in South Africa: 1991 saw the lifting of the state of emergency, the end of a 30-year ban on political and human-rights groups opposed to apartheid and the release of Nelson Mandela.

living under multi-party democracy by the end of this millennium.

When scrupulously implemented, democracy offers the possibility of many freedoms denied under other regimes like the right for ordinary people to participate in the running of their country, the freedom of assembly, a free press and so on. But democracy alone is no guarantee of human rights. India, the world's biggest democracy, has an atrocious human-rights record, mostly because of its inability to escape from traditional customs and conflicts. And every West European country earned rebuke in Amnesty International's 1991 Report for having violated their citizens' rights in some way.

It is also true that the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe is creating new problems. The end of communism has brought chaos as countries have raced to adopt a market economy. And nationalist and vigilante groups have sprung up with politics and behaviour little different from pre-War fascist parties.

East Germany is a clear example of this; its swallowing by the West has meant that rights which people had long taken for granted – like full employment and free health care – are rapidly disappearing. Over half the jobs in the former country have vanished. And the state health system has been dismantled, with socially-minded doctors being forced to open private practices; 200 of them have already committed suicide.[3]

Amid the orgy of freedom-talk many things remain unchanged. Worldwide, over one billion people live in absolute poverty, one in three children suffer serious malnutrition and one and a half billion people lack basic health care. About half a million women perish annually when pregnant or giving birth. Even in South-East Asia where overall economic growth has been dramatic, half the people still have no clean water or basic health care.

Trauma after an Iraqi helicopter strafes fleeing Kurdish refugees.

DONALD MCCULLIN / MAGNUM

And in Africa the last decade has been a development disaster.[4]

Democracy or no democracy, economic, social and cultural rights are still a low priority for almost all governments. Rich countries allocate a miserable ten per cent of their overseas aid to health, education and family planning. Third World governments on average devote just 12 per cent of their budgets to health and education for the poor, while many spend extravagant sums on arms. Poverty is often worst in those countries most resistant to political change like Pakistan. [5]

The human-rights records of Middle Eastern Islamic countries, with the notable exception of Yemen, are among the worst in the world and are deteriorating. In such places 'the new world order' might as well not exist for all the positive change it has wrought in ordinary people's lives.

The human rights of Third World citizens have often been used as bargaining chips in the political marketplace, with democratic governments as likely as any other to do the trading. It is not so much the sanctity of human life which is in the forefront of politicians' minds when they condemn or approve the human-rights performance of neighbouring countries, but whether the governments are 'political opponents' or 'friends'. When the Australian Government curries favour with Indonesia, or the UK Government with Kenya, it makes a nonsense of their pretending to take a country's human-rights record into account before giving aid.

But the relationship between the US and Iraq is the prime example of the 'blind eye' factor in human rights. Saddam Hussein's appalling human-rights record before the Gulf War – which included the gassing of large numbers of his own population – did not cause the Americans undue concern; certainly they (and other Western governments) continued to sell him arms. Only when he invaded Kuwait, thereby threatening US oil supplies, was President Bush impelled to wage what was claimed to be 'the greatest moral crusade since the Second World War'.[6] It seems that US governments pay lipservice to honouring human rights, but that when the chips are down and their own strategic or economic interests appear threatened, human-rights considerations go to the wall.

Nor can the UN be relied upon as an impartial defender of human rights. Historically it has tended not to interfere in the 'internal affairs' of member states – though this may be on the point of changing. But even if it took on the responsibility to intervene in the event of human-rights abuses, it might well be driven by the interests of its most powerful members, as the Security Council was driven by the US during the Gulf War.

The infected mind

A court orders a child to sit in a specially constructed plastic bubble at school to prevent her having physical contact with other children; prostitutes are rounded up and chained to a wall with their heads shaved. AIDS has had alarming consequences all over the world. But punishing the sick is as irrational as it is cruel, argues Alison Hall.

IMAGINE discovering that you have an incurable condition which will probably kill you. You don't know how it will strike or even when – it could be tomorrow or the next ten years. When it does, it will be unpleasant. And you must live with this knowledge for the rest of your life. How will you feel? Frightened? Lonely?

You might want sympathy and kindness. But all over the world people with HIV/AIDS are getting nothing but rejection, from their families, and from society as a whole.

At a recent conference, sufferers told of terrifying human-rights abuses: of being denied medical attention, dismissed from their jobs or driven from their villages and towns. Some had had their children wrenched from them. Others had been physically attacked.

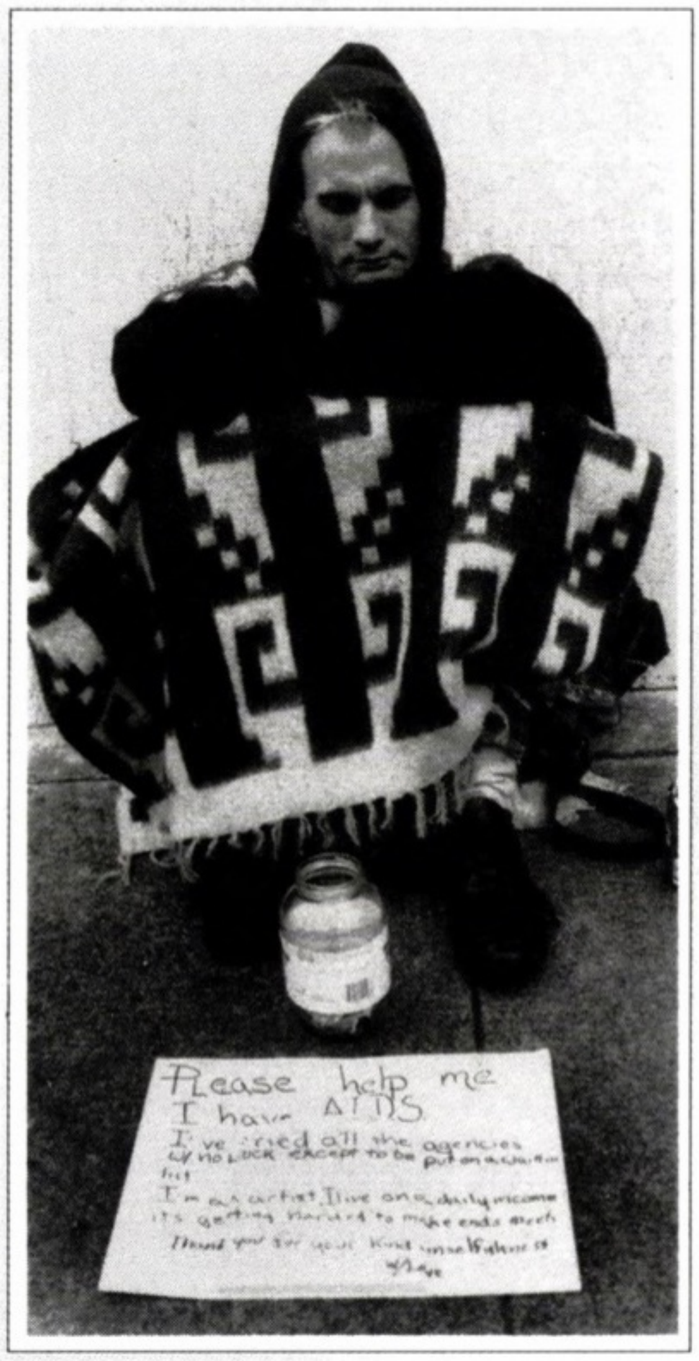
'My stay in isolation for being HIV positive was the most traumatic experience of my life,' says one Indian man. 'Early in the morning a policeman came to my house and asked me to come to the police station. After 64 days of isolation I was allowed to go home where I had to remain confined. No matter how I tried to calm myself, I felt desperately alone and afraid. I wondered what I would do if I had an accident and required medical attention – would anyone even give me an X-ray?

'Once a month I have to report to the police station for a check-up. You cannot imagine how terrified I am. Because if the doctor suspects anything is wrong I shall be isolated again.'

The World Health Organization estimates that between eight and ten million people are currently infected with HIV. And their numbers are growing. Those worst afflicted are women who, because of their low status in the world, are less able to protect themselves against infection, less likely to get sympathy, and more likely to get poor treatment.

'My husband died in 1989 and left me with five children,' says a woman with HIV from Botswana. 'It was a real blow. With him dead and me infected and sickly, life was not easy. My parents-in-law wanted me to give them every little asset from pots and pans to the bed. My father-in-law was set to sell my sewing machine. I came home from hospital one day to find the children saying that "many uncles and Grandpa came for the oxen".

'They wanted me to starve with my children... leaving them to remove what ever they wanted. But to their surprise I remained strong. People helped me with my work and thank God I now have something to feed the kids with.'



CINDY CHARLES / GAMMA-LIAISON

Much of the discrimination against HIV/AIDS sufferers was triggered by irresponsible reporting in the early 1980s, when HIV was identified with particular groups of people, sometimes known as the four Hs – Haitians, Homosexuals, Heroin addicts, and people with Haemophilia. Everybody else was given the false but comforting impression that they were safe so long as they kept away from these groups.

They were wrong. AIDS can be passed on in three ways; through sexual intercourse, blood and blood products, and from mother to child. In short, there is no such thing as high-risk groups, only high-risk behaviour.

It is of crucial importance to all of us that the rights of people with HIV/AIDS are respected. The only real defence against AIDS today is for people to change their behaviour. And if we allow HIV sufferers to be discriminated against, it will become impossible to reach those most in need of education, counselling and health care – people who think they are infected will be too afraid to come forward.

The best way of educating the public about human rights and AIDS is to allow sufferers to take charge of public education themselves. Like the infected boy in the US who was so victimized that he was eventually driven out of his neighbourhood.

He and his family moved to a very supportive community where they thrived. The boy began to enjoy life again, took part in school and made new friends. He helped his classmates to develop a new understanding about HIV. And later, when he was invited to speak at the Presidential Commission on AIDS, his informative and moving presentation inspired a standing ovation.

War itself is nothing but legitimized human-rights abuse. This is incontrovertible. Up to a quarter of a million people perished as a result of the Gulf War. Nearly two million were driven from their homes and Iraq's infrastructure was virtually destroyed. Child mortality has doubled in the region as a direct consequence; five million children could die according to UNICEF.[6] How you prevent human-rights abuses without resort to war or the threat of it is a question which might be incapable of resolution without a much fairer world order (and a reformed UN) – but it should be firmly on the international agenda.

There are casualties not just in war but every day in the operation of the global free market. And special provisions must be made to defend areas like health and education – otherwise the poorest go to the wall. 'It is the responsibility of government, among other things, to ensure basic investments in people – in nutrition, clean water, safe sanitation, family planning services and education, ' says the recent UNICEF report.[5] Or, as the former President of Senegal once declared, 'Human rights begin with breakfast'. [7]

There is no excuse for human-rights abuses at any level of society. Laws should be changed to comply with human-rights conventions. There should be re-education programmes for those in positions of power, particularly the police and security forces. And people need to be educated about their rights – for only then will they start to demand more from their leaders.

Once we have won these freedoms, the challenge will be to keep them. Liberties are always vulnerable to being swept away by the ignorant and the power-crazed. They will never be secure until the global community understands that fighting for rights is an unending process. 'Eternal vigilance', as a sage once said, 'is the price of freedom.' ■

1 *Starving in Silence*, Article 19, 1990. **2** From consultations with Charles Humana about his forthcoming update of the *World Human Rights Guide*. **3**'Come back East Germany, all is forgiven', Brunhilde de la Motte, *New Statesman and Society*, (4.10.91). **4** *Human Development Report 1991*, UN Development Programme. **5** *State of the World's Children 1992*, UNICEF. **6** 'How the world was won over', John Pilger, *New Statesman and Society*, (17.1.92). **7** *Economic, social and cultural rights, myths and realities*, paper by Julia Hausermann, Rights and Humanity.

TRASHING OUR RIGHTS

The United States is the most prominent of those countries which fail to recognize economic, social and cultural rights as being of equal importance to civil and political rights – even though this parity is accepted by the United Nations.

ILLUSTRATION / DAVID MOSTYN

UNITED NATIONS
INTERNATIONAL BILL OF HUMAN RIGHTS

CIVIL AND POLITICAL

You have the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This includes the right to hold opinions, and receive and impart information through any media.

You have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

You have the right to take part in the government of your country.

You have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

If arrested you are entitled to a fair public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL

You have the right to food.

You have the right to housing.

You have the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health.

You have the right to education, which will be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.

You have the right to a standard of living which is adequate for the health and well-being of yourself and your family. This includes necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond your control.

Sexual **exiles**

__Arman__ fled his home country in fear for his life. He explains why terror rules the lives of homosexual men and women in Iran.

IN Iran today homosexuality is punished by arrest and even death, which makes 'coming out' practically impossible. Every lesbian and gay lives in almost complete isolation and panic lest schoolmates, an employer or a family member become suspicious. Those who dare confide their secret know that if it gets out, shame will fall on the entire family.

They daren't even have books, magazines or any information about homosexuality because it could be found by a family member or by the police searching for forbidden items like political propaganda against the regime or alcohol and drugs.

Gay bars have been closed since the time of the Shah so homosexuals are forced to meet in parks, which are raided regularly by civilian-clothed police or 'guardists'. They demand identification and anyone who hesitates is immediately suspect. Gays revealing the slightest 'soft' or feminine characteristics are beaten and kicked or given electric shocks to different parts of the body. If the police feel they have captured a particularly 'dangerous' homosexual, he is humiliated and raped before being executed.

Lesbians especially lead intolerable lives. Forced to marry through family pressure, those who show no interest in sexual relations are accused of failing to obey their husbands, which under Islam is grounds for divorce – often preceded by a long period of humiliation and beatings.

Divorce brings even greater isolation and oppression: because the woman is no longer a virgin, her family fears she will misbehave sexually unless kept under constant supervision. Suspicions that she might be lesbian fuel their hostility.

Because the media tells Iranians incessantly that homosexuals who have been arrested are rapists and paedophiles, most people are very ignorant about homosexuality. Many believe AIDS is a justified punishment for those living sinful lives. Many lesbians and gays themselves believe they are the victims of disease or mental disorder.

It has not always been so, of course. In the Middle Ages the poets and writers of Persia wrote warm and beautiful sentiments about homosexual relationships. Even during the brutal repression of the Shah's regime, when political dissidents were arrested and executed, at least homosexuality was not outlawed. On the contrary, the pretence of adhering to Western culture gave gay people greater psychological freedom. And even if legislation did not protect homosexuals from arrest, there was little evidence of persecution.

But when the Shah fell, the *ayatollahs* and fundamentalist *mullahs* (priests) introduced a new morality, and religious fanatics began hunting down leftists and intellectual critics of the regime. Lesbians and gays were soon included on the published list of 'enemies' of the new rulers. And before long they were being rounded up in droves.

The first execution I read about in the Iranian papers came not long after the Shah's fall: a homosexual soldier who was killed after being caught having sex with a *mullah*. Since then lesbians and gays have been arrested and executed in ever-growing numbers – often having been severely tortured to make them confess the names of their friends and sexual contacts.

I soon realized that I had to leave my home country. Even if I refrained from being an activist and never again submitted a single article to an underground newspaper, my life would be in constant jeopardy: at any moment a friend being tortured inside a prison could reveal my name. Arrest would not only end my life but also disgrace my entire family. And how many names would I reveal once they started beating me on the soles of my feet, or hanging me from iron bars?

Eventually I fled to Sweden. But even in exile, none of us are safe. We live in terror of the Iranian fundamentalists who are eager to wipe out 'deviants', or political activists from Iran who won't allow 'unclean' elements to soil their noble cause.

Today no-one knows how many homosexuals have been killed or arrested in Iran. But we do know that those sentenced to death are given the choice of execution: being hurled from a cliff or high building, hanging, facing a firing squad or stoning. Many choose being thrown to their deaths. I think they feel this gives them a moment of freedom from earthly torture and pain. ■

Arman works for HOMAN, a Stockholm-based Persian-language organization for lesbians and gays. He told his story to Bill Schiller.

Terror is the hidden face of homosexuality in Iran.

MARC RIBOUD /MAGNUM

NI MEDALS

GOLD **CZECHOSLOVAKIA**
SILVER **HUNGARY**
BRONZE **NAMIBIA**

NI VOTES OF CENSURE

1 **BURMA (MYANMAR)**
2 **IRAQ**
3 **IRAN**

THE RIGHT TO **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

Freedom of expression is intimately connected with other human rights because it enables public scrutiny to curb the excesses of potentially repressive governments. It cannot exist side by side with violence; yet violence makes its absence hard to detect. After all, there is little need to imprison political opponents if they are too frightened to speak.

LIBA TAYLOR /PANOS

MEDAL WINNERS

Several Eastern European countries have made substantial advances in freedom of expression over the past five years – most notably Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Before the revolution in **Czechoslovakia** most media were controlled by the state. But once the revolution got going official newspapers began to report openly. People sometimes bought five newspapers each. They listened to the radio and watched TV constantly, so as not to miss any news. Slowly reporting became more factual, although comment was scant.

In March 1990, Parliament amended the 1966 Press Law to allow all adults the right to publish periodicals. And today censorship is forbidden. Diversity of opinion has burgeoned. The press has expanded massively with 25 new newspapers and magazines registered between December 1989 and January 1990 alone.

In June 1990, the first free parliamentary elections for 44 years were held, involving 22 political parties. The growing freedom of expression has been accompanied by a relaxation of physical oppression. Critics of the regime who were imprisoned have been released and the death penalty has been abolished.

A more open press has also emerged in **Hungary** since 1989 when the first independent daily newspaper was launched in the south. Books are no longer censored. The state monopoly on radio and television has been abandoned. And in 1990 Hungary held its first free elections since 1947.

Namibia has liberalized fast since 1988 when it was decided that South African and Cuban troops would leave the country. Exiles have poured back in their thousands and in 1989 more than 710,000 Namibians elected a National Assembly to draft the country's first constitution. Independence was declared on 21 March 1990, and the human-rights guarantees in the new constitution generally meet the basic international human-rights standards, including a liberal attitude towards freedom of expression.

VOTES OF CENSURE

Burma (Myanmar) has been in turmoil since 1988, when more than 3,000 civilians were killed by Government troops during student-organized protests for democracy. Despite severe restrictions on the freedom of speech and assembly, 233 new political parties were formed in the run-up to an election which resulted in a huge victory for the country's biggest and most vociferous pro-democracy party, the National League for Democracy. However the party's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, was then placed under house-arrest and the military government continues to rule through martial law.

Repression is intense. Suspected political dissidents are tried by military tribunals. Meetings of more than four people are banned. Overnight travel outside an individual's own town must be reported to military authorities.

Political freedom is practically non-existent, and the written press, television, and radio are owned and controlled by the military. Those accused of anti-government activities face one of three sentences: three years' imprisonment, life imprisonment, or death.

For many years before **Iraq** invaded Kuwait in 1990, Saddam Hussein's Government had brutally repressed members of opposition political groups (Shias, Kurds and their sympathizers).

Thousands were jailed, tortured or executed, and many more were exiled to Iran. The Iraqi Government dropped chemical weapons on its own people to stop rebellions and destroyed hundreds of Kurdish villages. The cruelty was extended to Kuwaitis after Iraqi soldiers invaded.

Nothing has changed since defeat in the Gulf War. Over 100,000 books are forbidden. Political singers have their songs silenced. And anyone who dares insult the President or the authorities risks life imprisonment, the confiscation of all their property – or death if 'the insult was flagrant and aimed to stir public opinion against the authorities'.

In **Iran** freedom of expression remains very limited, despite the death of Ayatollah Khomeini and the succession of the more moderate President Rafsanjani. The only acceptable parties are those that support the regime or are apolitical. All media are censored, from literature to television and cinema.

Capital punishment is common, and those who commit illegal sexual acts, like adultery, prostitution, or homosexuality, are often publicly beheaded or stoned to death. Religious minorities experience terrible abuses of all their rights while women can be imprisoned, fined, or flogged for wearing 'improper' clothes.

Sources : *Human Rights Watch World Report 1990*; *Information, Freedom, and Censorship World Report 1991*; *Third World Guide 1991-2*, Montevideo; consultations with experts in the field.

The **divided** mother

The girl is ill but her brother gets the medicine; she is thin but he gets the food. ***Maria Naseem*** *tells the true story of Rahat from Pakistan.*

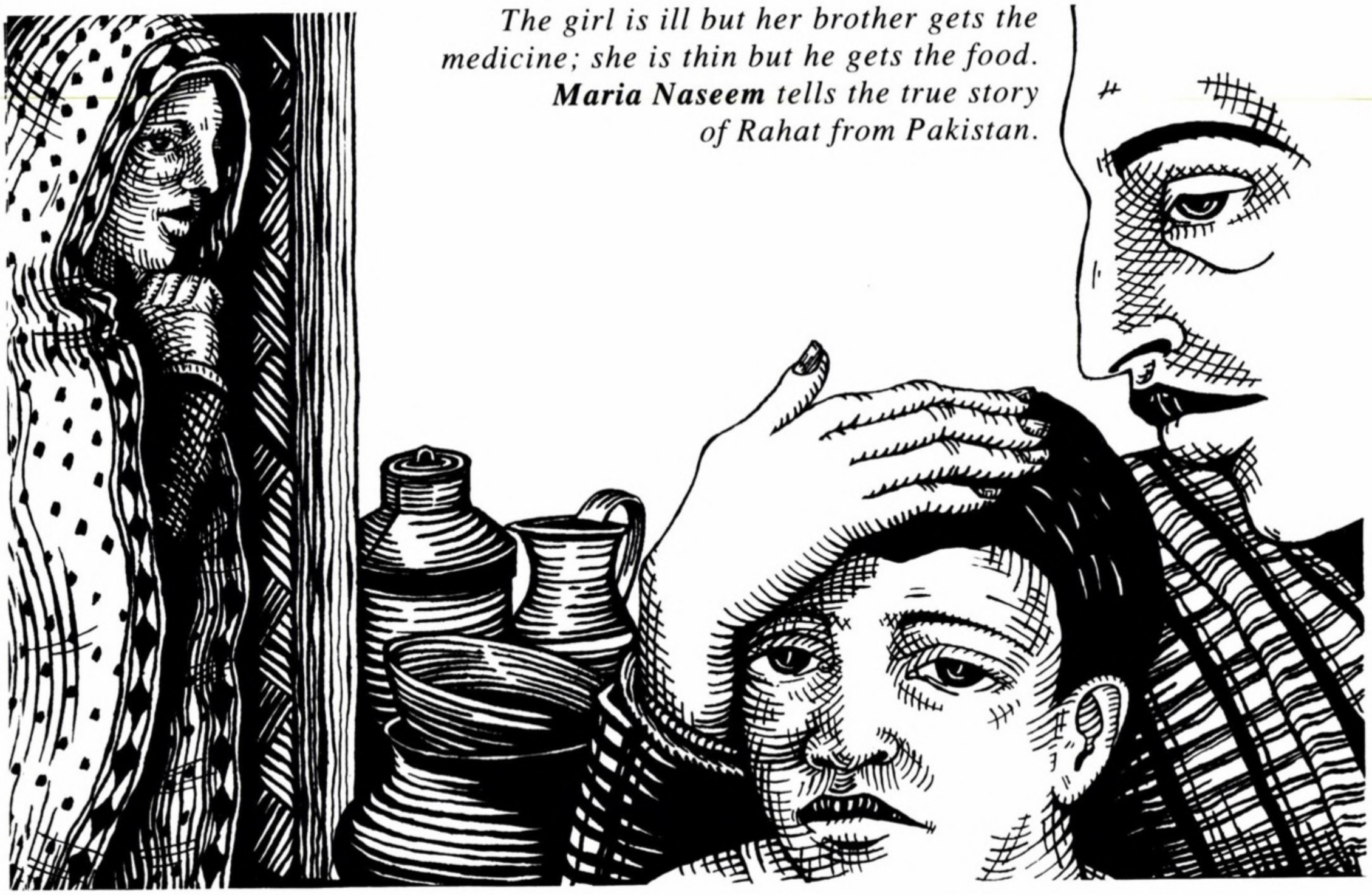


ILLUSTRATION / MIRIAM MCCURDY

'She has been possessed by an evil spirit! *Allah Khuda*, my daughter!' From the room where Rahat lay, she could hear her mother's wails. Through the crack in the door she watched and listened to the commotion in the yard. The village women sat shaking their heads in pity and sympathy while her mother cried and raised her hands to God, beseeching Him to save her family.

Rahat tried to move her head but it throbbed. She wanted to call her mother to find out what had happened. She had woken from such darkness, and was frightened lying in the room alone. Why didn't her mother sit beside her, bathe her head and speak words of comfort?

Then she remembered how she had been washing up teacups when her arms and hands started trembling and the china crashed to the floor as she jerked this way and that. She couldn't remember anything else, only the shock which hit her when she awoke...

'Send her to the faith healer,' a woman said. 'He is the only one who can cleanse her of the evil.'

No, no, not the *Pir*. Rahat knew how he cured sickness. Once she had watched him beat it out of a tiny girl with his powerful hands until the child was practically unconscious. Ever since, Rahat had prayed for good health.

By now the wailing had subsided and Rahat pulled herself up off the bed and went to the door to look for her mother. Her brother Dilawar had returned from school and was sitting in his mother's arms, complaining that the teacher had hit him with a stick that morning because his work was poor. The mother stroked her son's head. 'What am I to do now? This boy is sick and they beat him,' she crooned.

Dilawar was slightly retarded and suffered from behavioural problems; Rahat thought that he was also basically lazy. Often she watched him leave for school in the morning, carrying a big bag of books on his back and dragging his feet despondently. She was envious because if she had been permitted to continue attending school, she would have been a willing pupil. But Rahat also felt sorry for her brother because he seemed unhappy; and a little frightened of him because he was frequently violent. And that night she thanked God that all attention was on him because she was saved from being taken to the *Pir*.

Dilawar had always come first in the family, and Rahat knew it was because he was a boy. Her father often beat and abused her mother for having borne him a girl-child; he regarded girls as a waste of money.

Whenever Rahat's mother received such a beating she always blamed Rahat for her bruises. And in her heart Rahat knew that her mother was afraid to show her any love.

Her brother eventually left school and started working in one of the children's nurseries in town. Some days Rahat went to visit him. And it was at the nursery where her body was once again seized by an uncontrollable force which sent her limbs flying in all directions, and where she collapsed unconscious on the ground. When she came round Dilawar was holding smelling salts under her nose.

She was taken to see a doctor at the mental hospital nearby while her mother was fetched from the village. The doctor told them that Rahat was suffering from psychomotor epilepsy; she prescribed a dose of Tegratol and emphasized that it was imperative Rahat take the medicication to

prevent further fits. Her mother exclaimed at the price of the tablets as she tied them up in a corner of her *chadar*.

Dilawar was also treated for his moods, his insomnia, and his fits of temper. The doctor gave him a mild tranquillizer which was much cheaper than the Tegratol.

That evening Rahat's father was furious when he heard how much money had been spent on the Tegratol. He ordered her to give the medicine to Dilawar.

'He needs it more than you. He really is sick,' her mother explained to Rahat apologetically. Then she added consolingly, 'Here, you take Dilawar's medicine'. Rahat took it with a rising fear, because the doctor had said without the Tegratol she would not get better.

After that, Rahat lived in fear of the attacks which came without warning at any time of the day or night. Sometimes she looked in the mirror and was shocked at the dark shadows under her eyes and her sunken cheeks. Her father often criticized her for being so thin, saying: 'What man will ever want such a weakling for a wife?' And Rahat never thought to say that if every day the meat from the curry was saved for Dilawar then she could not get strong. If she had said such a thing, she would certainly have been accused of not caring enough for her brother.

After a fit she often found herself lying in the dark room while her mother wept in a corner. Now that Rahat was older, her mother no longer called the village women to listen to her woes, because she was convinced that the fits were a punishment for some wrong-doing: 'You have committed a sin. We must marry you before you bring shame on us.'

Rahat begged her mother not to marry her yet, she was just 16 and could wait a little longer. But her mother became convinced that Rahat was planning something with one of the village boys.

The man to whom she became engaged was called Afzaal, a middle-aged widower from the town, who lived and worked in Saudi Arabia. He agreed that he would marry Rahat before going back abroad and assured the family that she would be well settled with his elderly mother and widowed sister. He would provide everything for her.

The arrangement pleased Rahat's mother because Afzaal would see so little of his wife that he would never realize that she was flawed by fits. He could also afford to give her money – enough for her to buy the Tegratol and, with the Grace of God, the fits would cease. Rahat's mother was at last free of her burden.

* * *

Today Rahat has three children; two girls and one boy. She only has fits when she has not taken her medication and even then her in-laws don't bother about her ailment. Their only concern is that she does not eat with her children lest they catch her disease.

Now that the fits have subsided Rahat doesn't worry so much about her own health. Her main concern is for her eldest daughter, Parveen, who suffered typhoid when she was three and has grown up very weak and a little slow. Although the doctors tried to convince Rahat to take her daughter for regular check-ups, Rahat cannot afford the fees because all her expenses are controlled by her mother-in-law who says: 'Spare the money, you'll need it for your son's school fees'.

In the mornings Rahat stands silently at the kitchen door and she watches her sister-in-law serve the children breakfast. Rahat loves all her children equally. But her in-laws rejoiced when her son was born. And her son loves Afzaal's sister because she gives him special attention and feeds him fresh *parathas* dripping in butter. Rahat feels tears stinging her eyes and her heart wrenches at the sight of Parveen sitting beside her brother, so small and thin, picking sadly at her dry *chapatti*.

Rahat wishes so much that she could intervene, and take the steaming *paratha* out of her son's hand, break it into three and share it amongst all her children. But she stays quiet because she knows if she speaks up there will only be an argument which will change nothing. If she oversteps the mark she will be thrown out with her two daughters and separated from her only son.

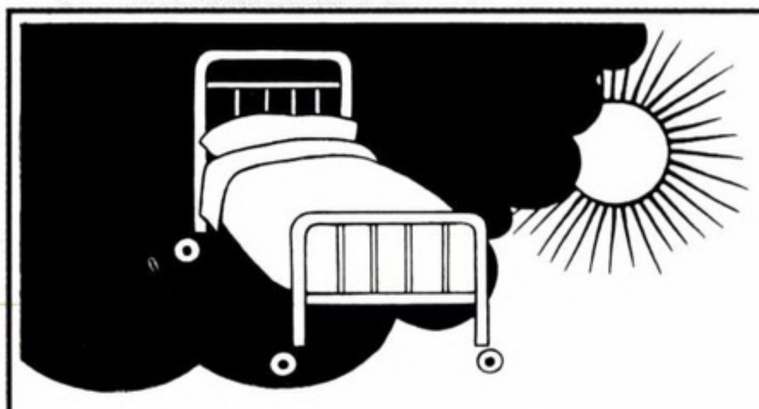
She vividly remembers the day she was deprived of her medicine and feels as helpless now as she did then, with no control over the well-being of her own children.

She still visits the doctor who first diagnosed her, because there she can cry freely. The doctor listens patiently as Rahat tells her troubles: how she only sees her husband for one month every year, that he never writes to her and that he sends his money to his parents who only give Rahat just enough for the cost of the Tegratol which she so badly needs.

She also tells the doctor how worried she is about her ailing daughter. She wishes so much to see her grow up strong and healthy. But whenever Parveen is particularly weak and Rahat tries to nurse her, the in-laws accuse Parveen of vying for attention with the son and beat the girl.

The doctor doesn't criticize Rahat for not caring; she understands how frustrating it is for this woman to feel so trapped and powerless. And after her visit Rahat feels a little stronger, and more able to get through another week. ■

The names in this story have been changed. Maria Naseem is a former NI staff-member who now lives and works in Lahore.



NI MEDALS

GOLD **BOTSWANA**
SILVER **COSTA RICA**
BRONZE **CHILE**

NI VOTES OF CENSURE

1 **PAKISTAN**
2 **SOMALIA**
3 **CHINA**

THE RIGHT TO **HEALTH**

Discrimination against particular social groups jeopardizes their right to health – and in the case of women this indirectly undermines the health of children as well. Every year half a million young women who might have survived die from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes. One-third of all maternal deaths occur because the births are too close together, the mothers are too young or too old, or because they have too many children – and all of these deaths could have been prevented by education on contraception and birth spacing.

Children benefit as their mothers' health improves. At present over 40 million children die every year before reaching their first birthday and a large proportion of these are girls who might have lived if they had had the same kind of access to health care and food as boys.

The developing countries which have most improved their people's right to health are those which make basic health care available to all, either free or at a cost that people can afford. They target the most vulnerable groups instead of spending their precious money on prestige Western-style hospitals that only serve an elite.

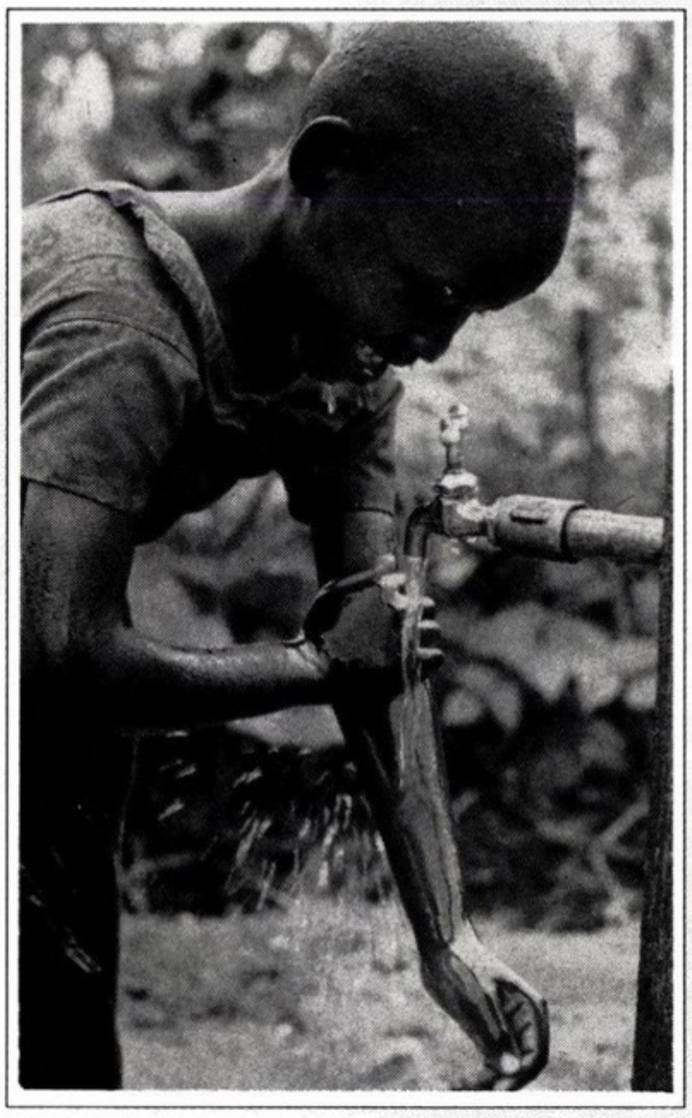
MEDAL WINNERS

Botswana is a health success story. It has almost reached its target 80-per-cent coverage in immunizing children against major childhood killer diseases and by 1988 it stood second in Africa only to Zimbabwe in its level of contraceptive use. The country almost halved its under-five mortality rate between 1960 and 1989.

Botswana's concerted health programme is aimed at the most vulnerable people. For example, it has a nutritional surveillance scheme as part of its drought early-warning system; village health workers are widespread; almost 90 per cent of villagers have access to clean water; and 85 per cent of primary-age children attend school, where their work includes a programme on basic skills called Education for Life. All of these things combine to produce better health care.

Costa Rica has an outstanding record of human development: its people live longer than those of some industrialized countries. Half its spending goes on social areas like health, nutrition, and education, and in the last decade it has dramatically improved the health of its children by extending basic services to deprived sections of the population. Infant mortality and malnutrition continue to fall, although the rate of improvement has slowed as economic conditions have worsened.

The social reforms began in the 1940s after the army was abolished and institutions were created for health education and social insurance. The country's history



MAGGIE MURRAY / FORMAT

of democracy has reinforced welfare policies, helped by increasing foreign-exchange earnings from coffee. Primary health care has been emphasized since the early 1970s. And by 1980 almost all Costa Ricans were covered by a combination of pensions, health insurance, social welfare and public health.

Chile has improved in all areas of human rights since its emergence from 17 years of military dictatorship in 1990. Today 64 per cent of its public health spending reaches the poorest.

VOTES OF CENSURE

Although child mortality rates in the Third World were cut in half between 1960 and 1989, the rates continue to be especially high for female children in most of Asia and North Africa. This is despite the fact that girl children are physiologically tougher than boys: given equal health care and nutrition more of them tend to survive.

Health statistics show **Pakistan** to be a particularly dismal example of discrimination against the female sex. Maternal mortality is a shocking 500 per 100,000 live births (compare Canada's 3 per 100,000 live births). Up to 80 per cent of pregnant or lactating mothers and 70 per cent of children are malnourished even though the country has sufficient food for everyone. Female literacy is under 20 per cent and life expectancy for Pakistani females is the third lowest in the world.

Health has tended to be a low priority for the Pakistani Government. Between 1972 and 1986, the country cut its health budget from 1.1 per cent of overall spending to 1 per cent while defence spending rocketed to 39 per cent. The country is one of the worst in the world in its provision of clean water and sewage services; only six per cent of the rural population have sewage systems and less than half of all people have access to clean water. These are truly statistics of shame in a country with the resources to do better.

There are massive human-rights abuses of all kinds in **Somalia**. Hundreds of thousands of people are internally displaced with no access to food, shelter, water, sanitation or health care; an estimated 75 children die every day and over half a million people are totally denied food. Random killings are common and a state of near-chaos exists. Any more complete denial of a people's right to health would be difficult to imagine.

China's public health service has seriously deteriorated over the last decade as the country has adopted market-orientated economic reforms. In the past the collectivization of agriculture helped to fund medical services in rural areas. And in the 1960s Maoist China pioneered the use of barefoot doctors – partly trained medical workers who provided primary health care in rural areas. This provided a model for much of the developing world.

But since the communes were dismantled in the early 1980s the medical care system has largely collapsed in rural areas. Basic sanitation and health education, together with public health services like immunization and ante-natal care, have been steadily eroded. The poor now have to pay for health care and therefore all too often avoid visiting a clinic.

Sources:*Human Development Report 1991*, United Nations Development Programme; *State of the World's Children*, UNICEF, 1989 and 1991; *National Health*, Pakistan,February 1989; *Human Rights Watch World Report 1990*; consultations with experts in the field.

They **stole** my name

Imagine your government demands that you change your name, speak in a different language and forgo your centuries-old traditions. An absurd idea? All this happened to the Turks in Bulgaria – until the country did a rapid about-turn. ***Hugh Poulton*** *explains.*

ISMAIL Hasamov brandishes a newspaper produced by the Rights and Freedom Party (DPS), the main political grouping for Bulgaria's ethnic Turks, and smiles as he talks about the future. 'Now we have our own political party and our own newspaper in Turkish. We have our names back. We can go freely to the mosque' – he gestures towards the minaret in the town centre. 'Such things were unthinkable only a few years ago,' he says, and falls silent a moment remembering the horrors of the recent past.

Things have changed dramatically in Bulgaria. The 'rebirth process' began on Christmas Eve in 1984 in the peaceful village of Gorski Izvor on the Greek border, which is inhabited by members of Bulgaria's largest minority, the ethnic Turks. The villagers were asleep when police with dogs, and armed troops with tanks surrounded the village and went from house to house, dragging people from their beds, and giving them identity cards with new Bulgarian names to replace their Turkish Islamic ones. The forced assimilation had begun as Bulgaria embarked on its goal – to become a 'unified socialist nation' with officially no minorities except small Jewish and Armenian ones.

Within three months the country's entire ethnic Turkish minority, numbering at least 900,000 and comprising some 10 per cent of the total population, had been forcibly renamed. At gun point, Ismail Hasamov became Ivan Asenov.

All Turkish publications ceased. Spoken Turkish was banned, on pain of a fine or worse. Many mosques were shut (the Turks are predominantly Muslims, while the Bulgarian Slavs are Eastern Orthodox Christians). Islamic practices like circumcision of male children became an imprisonable offence, both for the parents and those performing the operation. Women were forbidden to wear veils or *shalvari* (traditional Turkish trousers). Even Turkish music was forbidden. Hundreds were arrested or imprisoned. Many were killed outright, including members of other minorities, like the Roma (Gypsies) and Pomaks (Islamicized Slavs) who had been subject to the process of forcible assimilation before.

'We were unarmed, but they had guns and tanks and shot us down, even women and children,' says Ismail. The brutal repression forced a sullen token acceptance of the new order, punctuated by sporadic protest. 'We heard of a few who managed

Rail-roaded into exile from Bulgaria: Turks bid an anxious farewell

JOHN REARDON / KATZ

JOHN REARDON / KATZ

Embracing the homeland in desperation. Even with its appalling human rights record, Turkey was preferable to Bulgaria for Turks on the run.

to escape, like three families who dug a hole under the electrified fence on the Greek border and ran to freedom. But Bulgaria was guarded like a prison camp. And then there was Belene...' Ismail shakes his head slowly at the name of the notorious prison camp where hundreds of protesting Turks were imprisoned.

The assimilation campaign was disrupted when mass peaceful protests erupted in May 1989 throughout the north-east and southern regions of the country where Turks predominated. 'We heard from foreign radio stations about huge secret organizations of Turks in Bulgaria, like the "Democratic League" and the "Association for the Support of Vienna, 1989",' says Ismail. Through the radio he and other Turks were able to find out the movements of various protest groups around the country and to co-ordinate hunger strikes and marches.

'The authorities beat and shot us again,' says Ismail. 'In May, troops came to my village and a soldier with rifle and bayonet was put outside each door. Anybody who left was beaten. We heard of people shot in the streets, and in Dzhedel soldiers went from house to house beating everybody. It was terrible. But we would not give in, so they began throwing us out of the country.'

Faced with organized countrywide protests on a scale which in Communist Europe was only comparable with *Solidarity* in Poland, the authorities panicked and began mass expulsions. They picked up anybody whom they thought was involved with the protests and expelled them to Turkey. Many were given only one hour to get ready and had to leave in the clothes they were wearing. They considered themselves lucky to get out, even though their ancestors had lived in Bulgaria for five centuries.

After the expulsion, the authorities allowed mass emigration and an exodus followed. By late August over 300,000, out of a total population of less than one million, had fled to Turkey. The loss of the Turks shook Bulgaria's agricultural economy and threw the country into chaos.

But throughout all these events Ismail remained: 'I thought about going, and talked to my wife about it often, but our home is here'.

Then suddenly events took a turn for the better. On 10 November 1989, while the world was transfixed by events in Berlin and Central Europe, the Bulgarian leader responsible for instigating the mass assimilation campaign, Todor Zhivkov, was ousted in a palace coup led by his erstwhile foreign minister.

Immediately the assimilation policies were relaxed. A series of amnesties began which eventually released all Turks imprisoned for non-violent opposition to the assimilation. Among them was Ahmed Dogan, a former research fellow at the Institute of Philosophy in Sophia, who had been sentenced to 12 years in prison for leading a group opposed to the assimilation campaign.

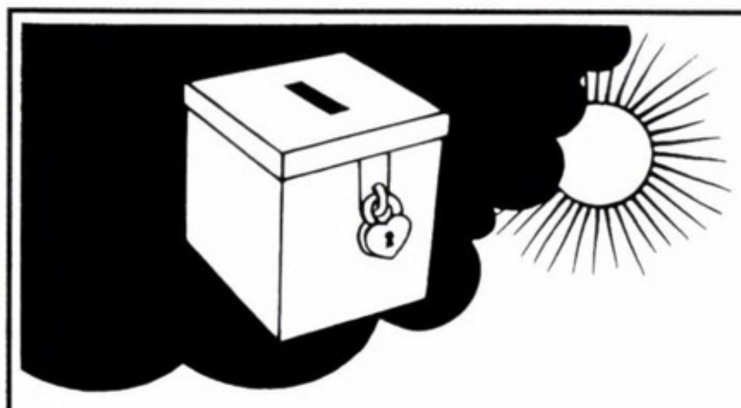
On his release he formed the DPS and led a concerted campaign to enable Turkish people to reinstate their old names. Within a year, after a series of heated debates it was eventually successful. That was not the only change. The mosques were reopened and people were free to worship. Turkish was allowed to be spoken openly. There were no more restrictions on Muslim dress. And a bi-monthly Turkish-language newspaper called *Muslim* had started publishing.

The DPS has gone from strength to strength, openly contesting both general elections held since Zhivkov's death. In the most recent it won over 20 seats in Parliament, with about seven to eight per cent of the vote. This is despite the fact that ethnic or religious-based parties are still banned under the new constitution, a provision which is used to deny the Roma – 550,000 strong and constantly subject to racism – a voice in Parliament.

Things may be better for the Turks but of course the scars will take time to heal. Ethnic tensions continue to run high in many parts of the country. A 'Bulgarian Republic' has been declared in the city of Razgrad, which has a 75-per-cent Slav population. And a Government proposal to allow schools in the appropriate areas to teach four classes a week in Turkish was met with threats of boycotts and civil disobedience from Bulgarian nationalists – the implementation of full minority education rights has been postponed as a result.

Despite these hitches, the situation for minorities in Bulgaria has dramatically improved in the last two years. And the country must be commended for reversing oppressive policies so quickly, while more or less keeping the peace. ■

Hugh Poulton was formerly East European Researcher for Amnesty International, and is currently a postgraduate in Modern Turkish Studies. He is author of *The Balkans: Minority States in Conflict (Minority Rights Group, London, 1991).*



NI MEDALS

GOLD **THE (FORMER) USSR**
SILVER **BULGARIA**
BRONZE **YEMEN**

NI VOTES OF CENSURE

1 **KENYA**
2 **TURKEY**
3 **IRAQ**

THE RIGHT TO REAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Unless every group in society is able to participate fully in the political process, real democracy is not possible. And one of the greatest impediments to this is discrimination against minorities.

Groups like the Turks in Bulgaria, the Kurds in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey and Travellers in Europe regard themselves and are regarded by others as different to mainstream society. Because they maintain their own identity and cultural practices, they are often seen as a threat to the unified nation state which seeks uniformity of culture and language. Such groups are frequently subject to violent repression or denied access to cultural, social or economic rights.

MEDAL WINNERS

One of the many profound changes in the former **Soviet Union** in the last few years has been a great improvement in official toleration of a whole range of minorities, especially religious and ethnic groups who were vigorously repressed before.

The new political freedoms have gone so far that, ironically, minorities may end up suffering as a result of the resurgence of nationalism and ethnic identity. Nevertheless, there is at the moment a degree of political pluralism in what was once a monolithic state and governments across the former empire have been forced to hear and respond to the will of their people.

Bulgaria wins the silver medal for reversing policies oppressive to minority groups (see Page 15).

Political participation has received a major boost in **Yemen** since the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (the South) and the Yemen Arab Republic (the North) were united in May 1990. All political prisoners have been released and the country now has a new constitution which guarantees civil and political rights and bans 'inhuman methods' of punishment. Parliament has begun discussing new laws related to press freedom and the legal system. Although the situation is far from perfect, it has incomparably improved.

VOTES OF CENSURE

Political participation in **Kenya** has become much more difficult in the past year. The Government has arrested and tortured advocates of human rights and multi-party democracy. President Daniel arap Moi threatened to root out those supporting the multi-party system 'like rats': Government ministers and high-ranking officials exhorted followers to attack would-be political reformers: one minister incited people to chop off the fingers of anyone who stuck up two fingers in support of a two-party system.

The Government accused Kenya's largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu, of supporting multi-party democracy for their own political ends. And in 1989 it started requiring that all Kenyans of ethnic Somali origin and Somali nationals living in Kenya carry identity cards, without which they could not obtain state-supplied services or permission to travel.

Last year, President arap Moi announced that refugees from Rwanda and Uganda must leave the country. This breached the Kenyan Government's responsibilities under a United Nations Convention which bans forcible repatriation except when a refugee has been found guilty of a serious crime.

In **Turkey** too, minorities experience daily abuses of their right to political participation. More than 20 associations, ranging from the Turkish Farmers Association to the Nurses Association, reported harassment in 1990, including raids on offices and the banning of political gatherings. Several political parties which were prohibited after the 1980 coup are still forbidden.

Kurdish people are forbidden to utter their native language at formal events, unable to call their children by Kurdish names, to observe Kurdish holidays or dance in the traditional fashion. Lawyers cannot even speak Kurdish if their clients do not understand Turkish.

Thousands of political prisoners were detained in 1990, many of whom were condemned to death after unfair trials. Torture is used extensively.

Iraq has appallingly treated thousands of political prisoners who were detained without charge or trial in 1990, including Iraqi exiles, foreigners, political opponents and their relatives, and Kuwaitis. Again torture is routine.

The Kurds have suffered especially in recent years, culminating in their escape from Saddam Hussein's army towards the end of the Gulf War. In 1985 the Government tried to end the rebellions in the north-east by forcibly resettling the Kurds. By the end of 1990 about half a million Kurds had been transferred, while hundreds of Kurdish settlements had been eradicated. And twice between 1987 and 1988 dozens of Kurdish villages were destroyed by chemical weapons dropped on them from above.

JENNY MATTHEWS / FORMAT

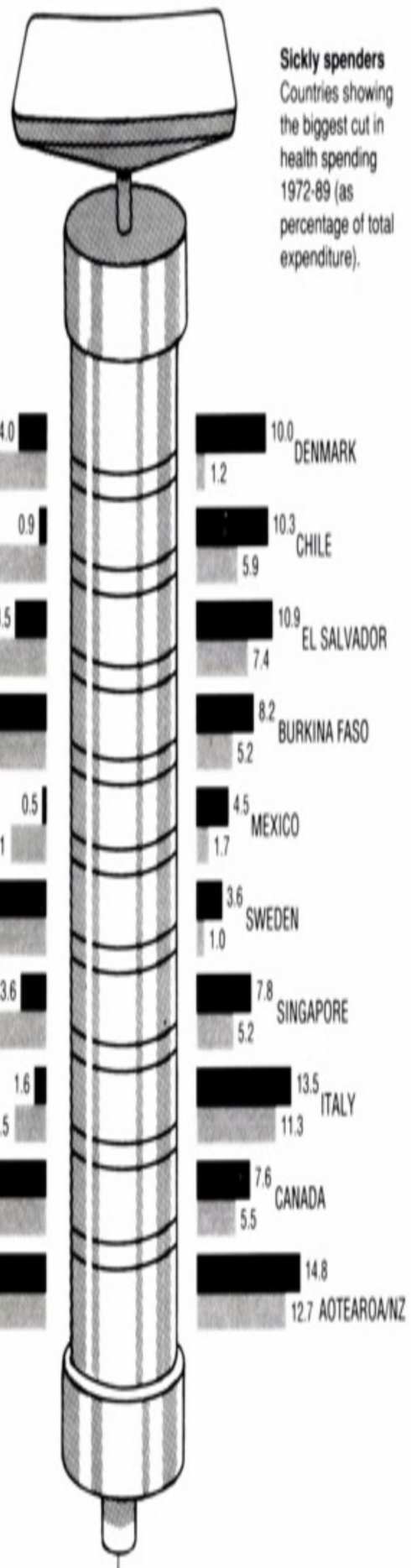
Sources: *Human Rights Watch World Report*, 1990; *World Directory of Minorities*, Minority Rights Group, Longman; Information, Freedom and Censorship, Article 19, 1991; *Third World Guide* 1989-90 & 1991-2; *Amnesty International Report* 1991; consultations with experts in the field.

HEALTH

Many of those countries which increased their health spending between 1972 and 1989 are among the poorest while some very rich countries slashed their health spending during that period. [1]

Healthy spenders
Countries showing the biggest increase in health spending 1972-89 (as percentage of total expenditure).

Sickly spenders
Countries showing the biggest cut in health spending 1972-89 (as percentage of total expenditure).



CORNELL CAPA / P. MARLON / MAGNUM

DEMOCRACY

The world is more democratic than it was five years ago. Out of 88 countries monitored in 1985, 18 had moved towards greater democracy by 1990 by holding multi-party elections. [2]

They were: Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Panama, Hungary, Benin, Bangladesh, Poland, German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Pakistan, Paraguay, Bulgaria, Philippines, the USSR, Romania. Algeria and Haiti were also included but have since suffered coups.

Among the countries not monitored in this survey, Uruguay, Namibia and Zambia have also held multi-party elections since 1985 – and there are many more such elections on the way, especially in Africa and the constituent parts of the former Soviet Union.

MAGGIE MURRAY / FORMAT

1 *World Development Report 1991*, World Bank. 2 *Human Development Report 1991*, UN Development Programme. 3 *State of the World's Children 1987 and 1992*, UNICEF. 4 *State of the World's Children 1987 and 1991*, UNICEF. Countries scoring above 100% have not been included. 5 *Freedom Review*, Freedom House, New York, 1985 and Jan-Feb 1992.

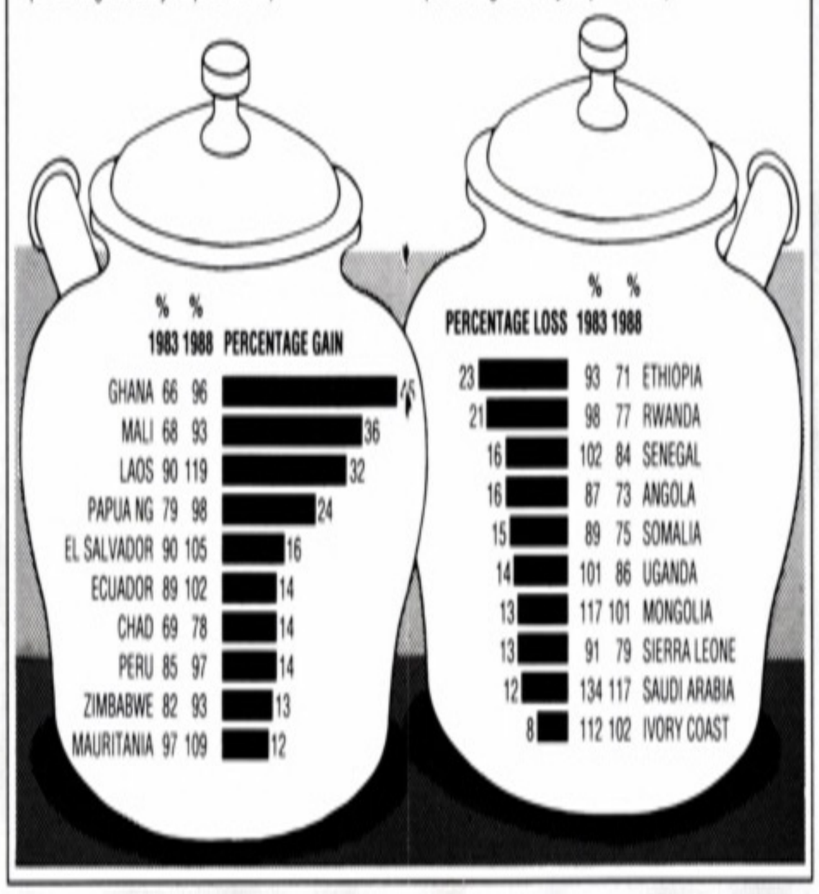
Using global statistics, Western countries would win a Human Rights Olympics outright every time because they have more money than Third World countries. So the NI takes a different approach and examines those countries that have improved or deteriorated most in recent years.

FOOD

The amount of food available to people each day altered markedly in some countries between 1983 and 1988. [3]

Better nourishers
Countries showing the biggest increase in the daily supply of calories per head of population (as a percentage of daily requirements).

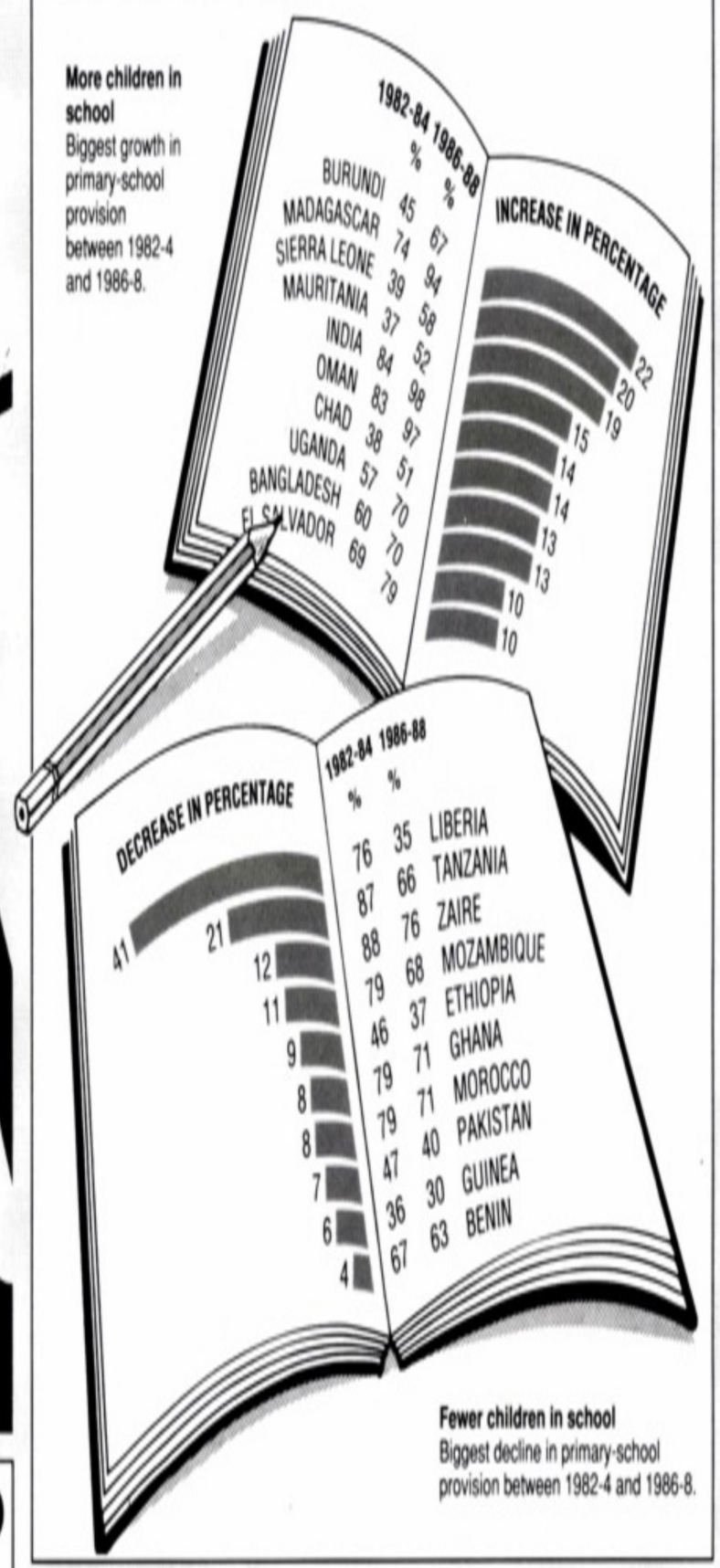
Worse nourishers
Countries showing the biggest fall in the daily supply of calories per head of population (as a percentage of daily requirements).



EDUCATION

In most countries the proportion of children receiving primary education remained fairly constant through the 1980s. But in a few there was a startling rise – and in others an even more startling fall. [4]

More children in school
Biggest growth in primary-school provision between 1982-4 and 1986-8.



Fewer children in school
Biggest decline in primary-school provision between 1982-4 and 1986-8.

PRESS FREEDOM

Rich countries generally find it easier to allow a free press, since material comfort gives their citizens less cause for dissent. Among our readers' countries, the UK is conspicuous by its absence from both lists of most free countries, while Costa Rica's inclusion among much wealthier nations is a major achievement. [5]

RON GILLING/ PANOS

The best and worst countries in 1985 and 1991 as regards press freedom, as rated by US human-rights group Freedom House:

MOST FREE 1985 Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, West Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland.

MOST FREE 1991 Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, USA.

LEAST FREE 1985 Afghanistan, Albania, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Central African Republic, China, Cuba, Haiti, Iran, Sudan, Vietnam.

LEAST FREE 1991 Afghanistan, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Iraq, Libya, Malawi, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Vietnam, Zaire.

Offending **the eyes** of the mighty

When the Olympics came to South Korea, the poor had to be removed from view. The same happened in Bangkok when the IMF and World Bank came to town. But where did the squatters end up? ***Stephen Webb*** *tells a tale of two families.*

SHIN KO wakes shivering with fear and calls for her husband. Evicted from three homes in the past four years, she lives in dread of another demolition crew throwing her family onto Seoul's uncaring streets, of again seeing her husband beaten by thugs with iron bars.

South Korea's government has brutally 'redeveloped' her life, demolishing it along with the walls of her home and leaving only the debris of empty cans, cardboard boxes, letters, rags and shoes.

Shin Ko was a victim of the 1988 Olympic Games, which were preceded by a mass eviction programme. Hundreds of thousands of Seoul's poorest people were forcibly removed so that a new Olympic village could be built. Shin Ko's home was bulldozed because it was visible from the path to be taken by the Olympic torch.

But this was not her first eviction. The first was in 1987 when the demolition force came with knives, baseball bats and iron bars. Riot police arrested those who resisted – like her brother, a construction worker, who was imprisoned for eight months.

Since the Olympics the family has been evicted again in one of the most violent clearances of recent years. Shin Ko and her husband were one of 800 families attacked without warning at four in the morning by 5,000 police and knife-wielding thugs who drove them from their squatter settlement around the Supreme Court of Justice.

Shin Ko's experience is far from unusual in the Third World, where rural people have been flocking to the cities for decades, drawn by higher-paying jobs and the prospect of better education for their children. As cities have become more overcrowded, land prices have rocketed, leaving the poor with no alternative but to resort to squatting. This is now one of the main forms of housing in many developing countries; between 20 and 40 per cent of people in the world's largest cities are squatters. And the situation is likely to worsen over the next decade, with over 300 million poor people expected to move into Asia's cities.

Governments find it hard to provide the new arrivals with the basic services they need – and all too often their response is simply to clear the poor out of the way. Take Bangkok. Here, as in Seoul, evictions have increased dramatically in scale and severity during the past five years. At least 10,000 people are evicted annually without compensation and there are 1.3 million people in slums or squatter settlements who live in constant fear of eviction.

The Thai Government is committed to broadening home ownership to include more middle-class people and regularly-employed blue-collar workers. But the poor have been left to the mercy of the property market. While well-off families often own more than one home, the cost of even the cheapest new housing is well beyond the reach of the two million urban poor.

No place for the poor: slum dwellers being evicted in Seoul, South Korea.

RENE BURRI / MAGNAUM

So they rent in slum areas – like that near the new Convention Centre where the IMF and the World Bank met in October 1991. Prior to the meeting Bangkok newspapers reported that 647 families or over 2000 slum dwellers were to be evicted because, according to the authorities, the slums were a 'good hiding place for terrorists'. Bangkok's Deputy Governor said the slums were an eyesore and would shame the country in the eyes of foreign delegates.

The Government initially set aside no land for relocation of the small community and allowed for no compensation. But at the last minute slum dwellers were given $240 and told to rent land cleared on state-railway property out of sight of the Conference Centre. While her husband struggled to build a new home on this land, Noi and her six-month-old daughter found themselves sheltering under an expressway with 60 other families. Her house had been cleared to make way for a shortcut to ease traffic during the IMF/World Bank deliberations.

Huddled in a tent, Noi's baby developed respiratory problems caused by the combination of damp with dust and fumes from the expressway. The authorities reneged on their promise to provide water and electricity. Sanitary conditions soon deteriorated. And Noi's family went into debt when her husband missed work while building their new house. Today the house is still only half built. Noi remains in the tents with her children, apprehensive about the future.

Shin Ko and Noi are just two among hundreds of thousands. If they could speak directly to their governments, they would doubtless try to explain that shelter is a basic human need. Without it, everything else from schooling to health care becomes impossible. But governments see only the numbers on the page; see only the eyesores which must be removed from view in the interests of international respectability. ■

Stephen Webb is an Australian journalist who specializes in South-East Asian affairs.

NI MEDALS

GOLD **COSTA RICA**
SILVER **CHILE**
BRONZE **SRI LANKA**

NI VOTES OF CENSURE

1 **SUDAN**
2 **NIGERIA**
3 **SOUTH KOREA**

THE RIGHT TO **SHELTER**

Shelter is one of our most basic needs: without it, it is almost impossible to carry on any other kind of activity. Yet at least one in every four people worldwide live without decent housing and over 100 million people live in absolute homelessness.

Governments should provide adequate housing for their people, not only because it is their right, but because it is an investment. It helps to guarantee a healthy, satisfied workforce and defuses social pressures that might lead to civil unrest.

As the era of cement comes to an end, energy planners are looking again at traditional building methods and materials, at simpler technologies. Often countries that cannot afford to provide houses for their poor can support people to build their own – or can make squatter settlements and shanty towns official, providing basic services like sanitation and clean water.

MEDAL WINNERS

Costa Rica has consistently had a good housing record but the Government embarked on a four-year programme between 1986 and 1990 to improve living standards and build 80,000 new dwellings. Low-income families are given housing loans with repayment schedules based on their ability to pay – no more than 30 per cent of the family income can go towards loan repayment. All housing projects funded by the Government must include adequate basic services. And people are encouraged to build their own homes using locally produced building materials such as bamboo.

The new government in **Chile** also deserves an award for seriously attempting to deal with the shelter needs of all its people by increasing money to the housing

ORDE ELIASON/LINK

sector and by subsidizing the poor. Its main goals are to improve sanitation, reduce overcrowding and meet basic needs. And a measure of the success of its housing programme is that infant mortality has decreased while sanitation conditions have improved in the last few years.

The current housing programme encourages people to build their own houses – focusing on unskilled women as a priority. And new settlements are being planned with particular care in areas vulnerable to natural disasters.

It may seem strange to award **Sri Lanka** a human-rights medal when up to 40,000 people have disappeared in the country over the past three years. But the country has an excellent housing policy based on the state supporting people's housing initiatives without intervening dictatorially. In particular the 'Million Houses Programme' has been set up to house five million people – about one-third of Sri Lanka's total population. Since it was launched in 1984 it has reached over 10,000 of Sri Lanka's 25,000 villages.

Slums have been upgraded. And a house-building competition has helped to disseminate the theme of self-reliance – around 2,000 houses are built every year by enthusiastic home builders, who are encouraged to build houses in harmony with natural settings and to plant trees.

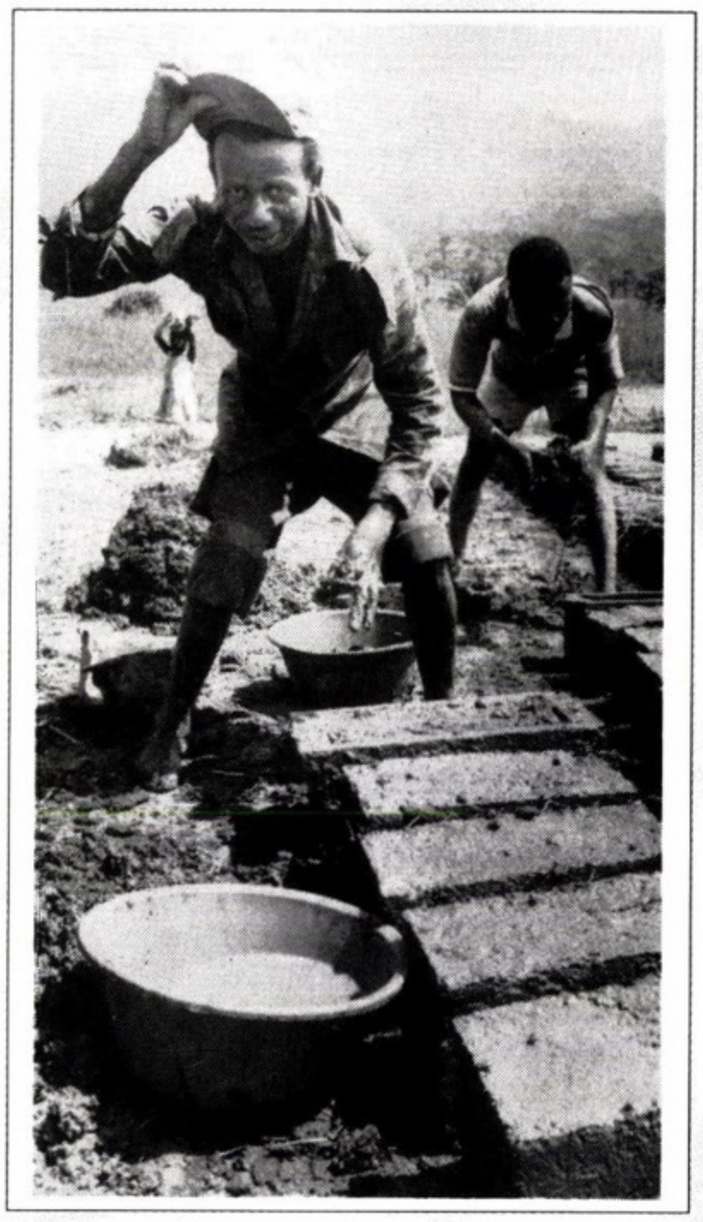
VOTES OF CENSURE

In the past decade, the populations of Third World cities have mushroomed, rents have rocketed and there has been a complete dearth of affordable homes. The poor struggle to survive in shanty towns, where clean water is often scarce and houses are packed tightly together.

Forced evictions are commonplace, from the Dominican Republic, where over 15,000 families have been evicted since preparations began for the Columbus centenary, to Kenya, where some 44,000 were driven from their homes by demolition squads. The rich world is not immune: In New York alone 400,000 evictions are initiated annually and around 2.5 million US people are rendered homeless every year.

Over 30,000 refugees in Khartoum, **Sudan**, witnessed the destruction of their homes by military bulldozers on 29 November 1990. There was no warning. And at the relocation site, which is 60 kilometres from the city, there is no proper water supply. The Government justified the eviction by asserting that the area was a haven for criminals. But in April 1991 it announced plans for forcible repatriation of many of the refugees.

Overall, housing conditions in the Sudanese capital have declined seriously and many people lack basic services. The



JENNY MATTHEWS /NETWORK

key obstacle to a proper housing solution is the misconception in Sudan that housing is a service, rather than an indirect investment. It receives a paltry two per cent of the Government budget.

Nigeria too has seen mass evictions – as when the Government uprooted some 300,000 people from Lagos's Maroko slum during July 1991. Residents received just seven days' warning before their homes were demolished. And police reportedly assaulted, raped and harassed some of those evicted, many of whom are still sleeping on the streets and under bridges. Those who were resettled have found themselves in overcrowded camps without heat, light, sanitation or clean water.

South Korea is one of the wealthiest developing countries – but the homeless in its vast capital, Seoul, have not seen the benefit (see facing page).

Sources: *Third World Guide* 1989-90 & 1991-2; *Human Development Report 1991*, UN Development Programme; *Environment and Urbanization*, Apr & Oct 1989; various documents from Habitat International Coalition, 1990 & 1991; *Forced evictions*, UN Economic and Social Council, 20 Aug, 1991; consultations with experts in the field.

Defying **the drought**

Botswana fights back even as hunger bites deep into the rest of Africa. ***Colleen Lowe Morna*** *explains how.*

MATAMA MAPHANE is an elderly widow who cares for her five grandchildren in a small village in Botswana. She is also a farmer, though she is not strong enough to tend more than one acre of land, which yielded less than one bag of grain a year during the drought between 1981 and 1987 and has only yielded slightly more in the last three seasons.

Matama survives by helping to build homes for teachers as part of the Government's drought-relief programme. This provides her with money to buy extra food. Without it, she says, she would have become an urban refugee; her grandchildren would probably not have survived.

The vast, semi-arid country Matama lives in seldom produces half its food requirements – even in a good year. Yet it has won high praise as one of the few African countries to have won freedom from famine. Its achievement lies not so much in its agricultural performance, but in handling the worst drought in the country's history in a way that made it possible for people like Matama to survive.

Thanks to a drought-relief programme and an early-warning system which ensured that food was distributed well, not a single person in Botswana died of starvation – and this at a time when some African countries were suffering massive famines. The country emerged from the drought with less malnutrition than before. Suddenly it seemed possible that it could become the first country on the continent to end hunger.

It was the discovery of diamonds in the desert which made this possible. Throughout the 1980s Botswana's economy had the fastest growth rate in Africa – indeed one of the fastest in the world. And today, while most African countries face vast debts and foreign-currency shortages, Botswana has enough money stashed in its central bank for three years' worth of food imports.

But having the means to import and distribute food is no guarantee that a country will feed its people: in mineral-rich Zaire, leaders have salted away resources while their people have continued to go hungry.

Botswana, however, is one of a handful of African countries to have enjoyed democratic government ever since its independence in 1966. Although the ruling Botswana Congress Party has yet to be ousted, it has gone faithfully to the polls every five years. And since most people in Botswana live in rural areas, drought is a serious political issue. The ruling party could never have stayed in power without taking the battle against hunger seriously.

The drought-relief programme had five main prongs. First, all vulnerable groups in rural areas – such as children under five and pregnant women – received supplementary feeding. Second, an extra 60,000 jobs were created in rural areas, equivalent to the number lost in the drought. Third, a special fund helped cattle owners to buy fodder and vaccinations, and bought up ailing cattle to reduce pressure on pastures. Fourth, poor arable farmers were given a huge discount on draft power, a simple plough and fencing. Fifth, farmers were paid to plough more land – and then to destump and plant it.

This programme did not come cheap, but Botswana has reaped huge benefits. While most drought-ridden African countries have seen increasing child deaths, Botswana's infant mortality rate has plunged to 72 per thousand – the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa.

More rain over the past three seasons has enabled Botswana to produce on average half its own food needs, compared with only 10 per cent during the drought years. The Government has scaled down agricultural subsidies every year since the last drought in order not to create dependency; and today only the sick and needy receive supplementary feeding. Thoughts are turning to how agriculture might support the country's one million people in the long term.

The key to the future may lie with small farmers like Makani and Baratani Majaya. Before 1972 Makani, like many Botswana men, worked in the mines of South Africa. But, as unemployment mounted there, he was made redundant and returned home.

'While I was working in the mines, I had no time for the family plot,' Makani recalls. 'It was a tired piece of land. But I decided to see if we could improve the soil.'

Initially the Majayas tried chemical fertilizers but these damaged the soil. So they experimented with manure until they found a mix that worked – and ploughed in a way that took best advantage of the rains.

As a result the Majayas have grown enough food even during the drought years. In the last three years they have produced enough of a surplus to grow vegetables for the Francistown market. Coupled with the Government's far-sightedness, innovations like theirs give Botswana hope.

Colleen Lowe Morna is a writer who has worked in Southern Africa for many years.

BRUCE PATON / PANOS

NI MEDALS

GOLD **BOTSWANA**
SILVER **INDIA**
BRONZE **ST VINCENT**

NI VOTES OF CENSURE

1 **SUDAN**
2 **THE (FORMER)USSR**
3 **GUATEMALA**

THE RIGHT TO **FOOD**

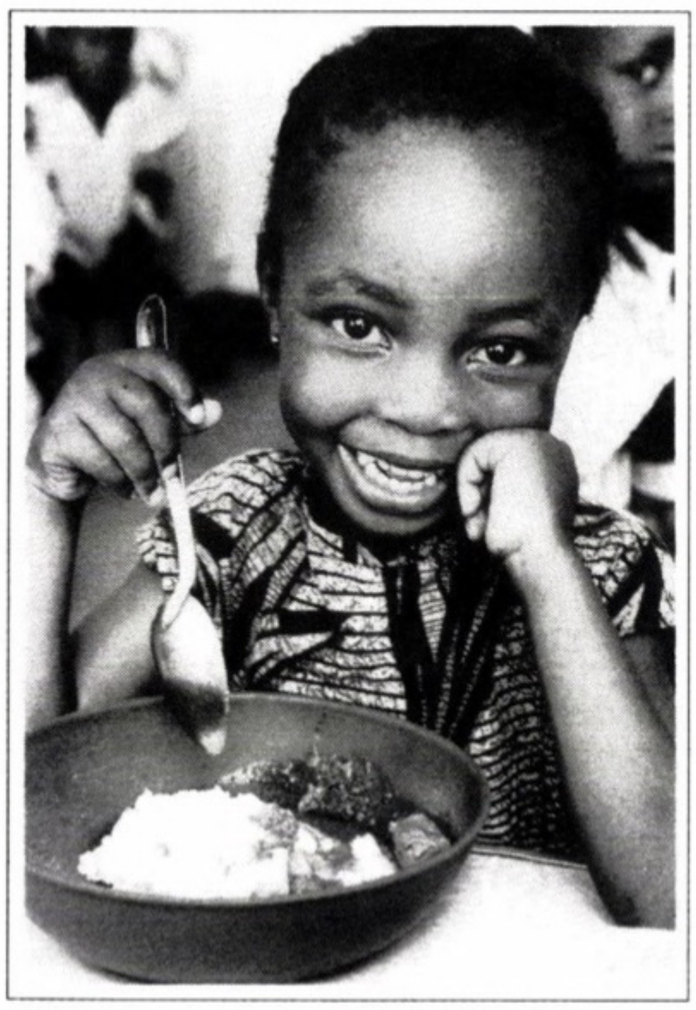
Taken at global level there is no shortage of food. In fact the world's food production is still increasing faster than its population. Yet all too many still go hungry and one in three children – around 180 million – suffer seriously from malnutrition.

It makes no difference if a country's overall food production is high, if people have no access to it. In the last decade, IMF-sponsored structural-adjustment policies and the decline in commodity prices have undermined many developing countries' attempts to ensure that their populations are well fed. The countries which have done best are those which have successfully averted famine – but even these have not conquered the everyday hunger of the poor.

MEDAL WINNERS

Botswana deserves the gold for reducing malnutrition significantly despite experiencing six years of drought in the 1980s (see facing page).

India's silver medal may seem strange when the country contains more hungry people than any other in the world. But it deserves commendation for its continuing success in averting famine. Its success is not due to increased production – food production only increased by five per cent per head between 1980 and 1987 – but rather to national policies of grain reserves, food distribution and food for work. Food prices in India remain remarkably stable despite the crises. For instance, during the most recent drought in 1987 and 1988, food prices increased by less than 10 per cent, largely because the shortfall in production was made up making reserve food available for sale.



JORGEN SCHYTTE

The Government has encouraged land ownership among the smallest land-owners over the past couple of decades. And the generally free media and political system holds the Government accountable during food shortages, so that it can't disguise or ignore these crises. The radical government in the state of Kerala in southern India deserves particular congratulation for reducing hunger to lower levels than elsewhere despite being one of India's poorest states.

Food production and distribution has also greatly improved in **St Vincent** since the election of the Democratic Party in 1984. Prime Minister James Mitchell is an economist who has prioritized food production and encouraged farmers to interlace food plants with their banana trees – the main agricultural product. Consequently the country boosted food production by 49 per cent per head between 1980 and 1987. It now has the best food-production record in the Caribbean.

VOTES OF CENSURE

Of the many failings of the government in **Sudan**, perhaps the greatest is its appalling record in relation to feeding its people. It has no control over the drought; but it has at times seemed more interested in disrupting than facilitating food relief for its hungriest people.

It has insisted on controlling all relief operations to prevent food relief from strengthening rebel fighters in the South; Sudanese forces have bombed towns where UN relief operations were in progress; and 40,000 tons of US grain intended for the South have been hijacked. The Government is suspected of having traded an additional 300,000 tons of sorghum with Libya and Iraq for weapons; and in 1989 it foolishly exported the entire national grain reserve.

The result of all this is that traditional food-security structures everywhere have collapsed. It is estimated that up to 300,000 people have starved to death in the last two years and that one-third of children now suffer from malnutrition.

Much has changed in the former **Soviet Union** but it deserves a vote of censure because the failure to get 1990's record harvest through to ordinary people showed that the food-distribution system has completely collapsed. One-third of each year's crop is lost anyway due to poor transportation and storage but in

MAGGIE MURRAY / FORMAT

1990 the Government also offered farmers a ridiculously low price for their food. Farmers were forced to sell for higher prices elsewhere, to barter food for goods, or even to store their produce in the hope that they could sell it for more later on.

The situation has worsened as central authority has collapsed. Empty shelves are common in grocery stores. And the republics are using food as a political weapon, restricting sales to other republics. Official sources estimate that around two million Soviet citizens are going hungry, while unofficial estimates place the figure at closer to 40 million.

Guatemala is now the only country in Latin America never to have implemented any land reform. Most families do not own enough land to feed themselves. And in order to get enough to eat they have to work every year on large farms, harvesting coffee, sugar or cotton. Conditions on these farms are appalling. Wages are under two dollars a day and landowners charge high prices for food, with the result that over 80 per cent of children under five are malnourished.

The lack of access to land is also the main reason behind the country's 32-year-long civil war; Over the last 30 years over 100,000 people have been murdered, and 50,000 have disappeared in a country with a population of only nine million. Most of those murdered were landless.

Sources: *Hunger and public action,* John Dre'ze and Amartya Sen, Clarendon Press 1989; *Food security and the environment*, IDS Bulletin, July 1991; 1991 reports from the Alan Shawn Feinstein World Hunger Program, Brown University; *The Human Development Report* 1991, UN Development Programme; consultations with experts in the field.

SIMPLY How to stop abusing human rights — a guide for governments

1 Open with style

Every country should incorporate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into its constitution. If this is technically impossible (for example where there is no constitution as in the UK) the government should pass a bill expressing a formal commitment to abide by the standard of human rights outlined in the Declaration .

4 Check for cheating

A government with a real commitment to human rights will have nothing to hide and so allow itself to be monitored by the United Nations. It will understand that by inviting the world to examine its behaviour, it will be helping to set an international standard for the way that governments should treat their people – and encouraging other governments to be open also.

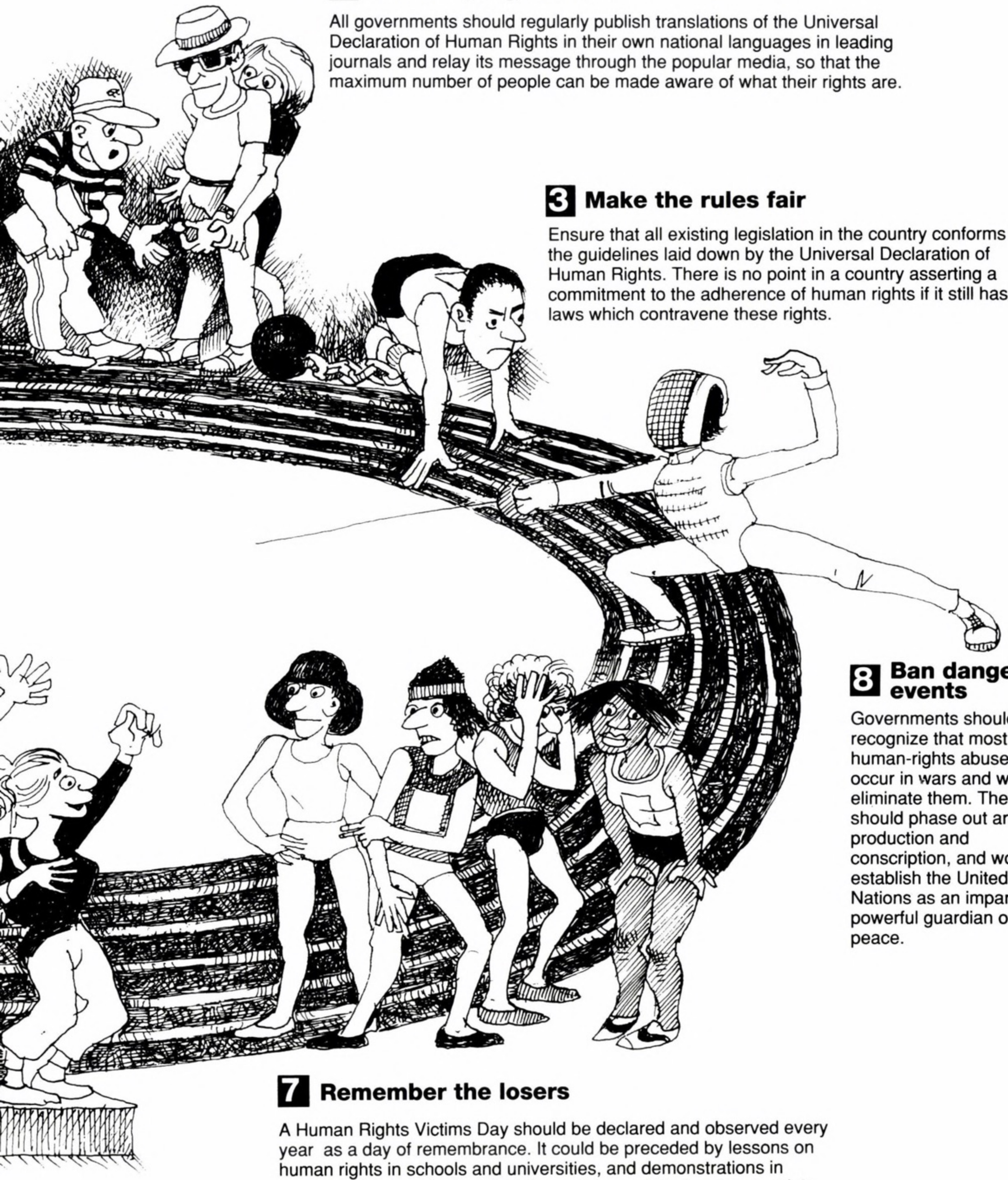
5 Retrain the powerful

Retrain those in positions of power so that they understand human-rights principles and act accordingly in the way that they treat the public. Such groups might include the army, police and civil servants.

6 Acknowledge the winners

Any country giving aid must take into account the human-rights record of the recipient country—and withhold aid where necessary. This would exert meaningful pressure on oppressive governments to improve their human-rights records.

ILLUSTRATION / CLIVE OFFLEY



2 Sell the programmes

All governments should regularly publish translations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in their own national languages in leading journals and relay its message through the popular media, so that the maximum number of people can be made aware of what their rights are.

3 Make the rules fair

Ensure that all existing legislation in the country conforms to the guidelines laid down by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There is no point in a country asserting a commitment to the adherence of human rights if it still has laws which contravene these rights.

8 Ban dangerous events

Governments should recognize that most human-rights abuses occur in wars and work to eliminate them. They should phase out arms production and conscription, and work to establish the United Nations as an impartial and powerful guardian of world peace.

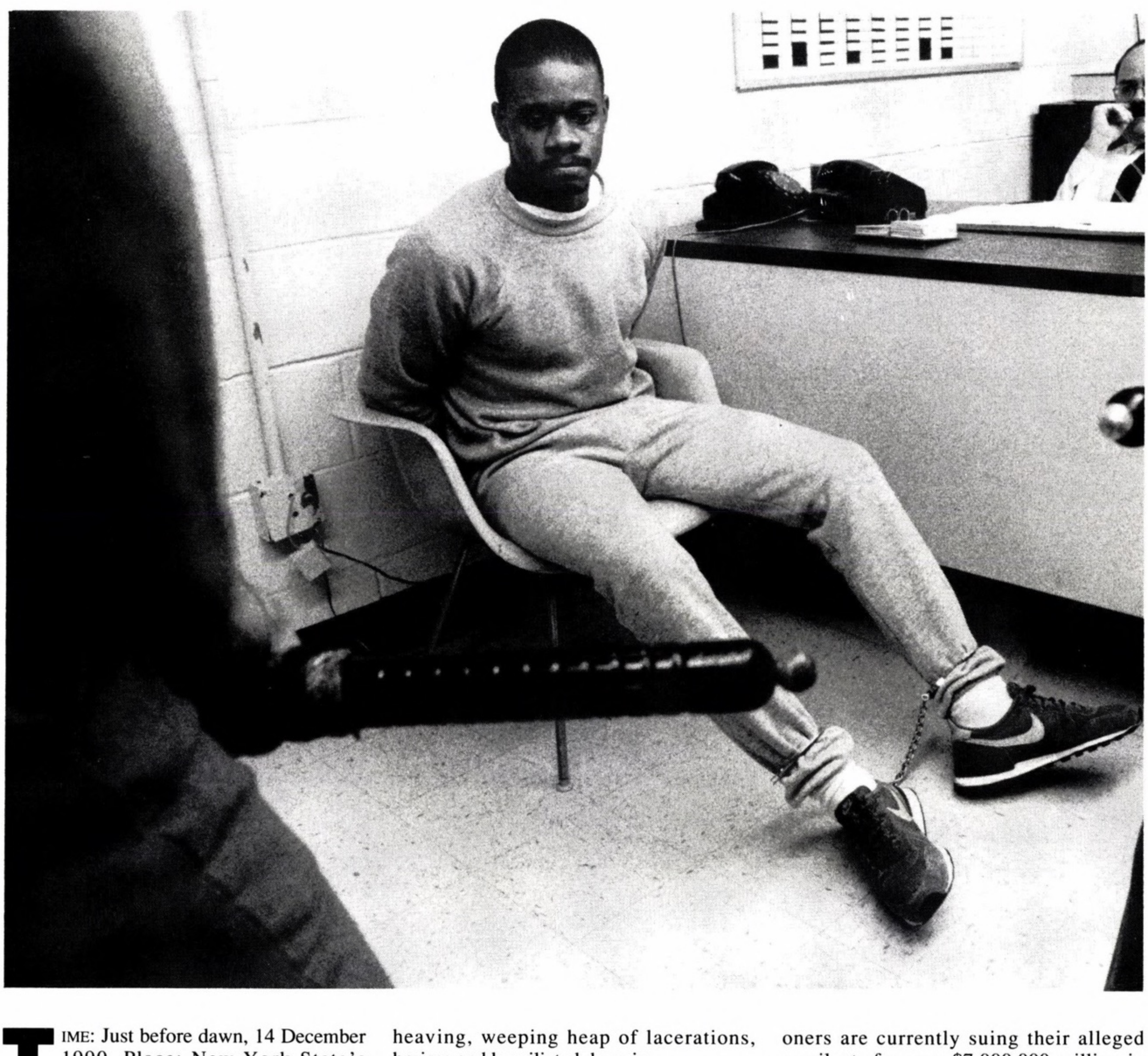
7 Remember the losers

A Human Rights Victims Day should be declared and observed every year as a day of remembrance. It could be preceded by lessons on human rights in schools and universities, and demonstrations in memory of those who lost their lives. This would help raise people's consciousness about human rights and popularize an international code of behaviour and a set of moral principles.

Ideas have come from *The Update to the World Human Rights Guide*, by Charles Humana, (to be published by Oxford University Press in New York and London, in the summer of 1992). Also from Julia Hausermann of Rights and Humanity in the UK.

Inside prison walls

Beatings, solitary confinement and electrocution are called torture – except when they happen in the United States of America.
***Matthew Reiss** investigates.*



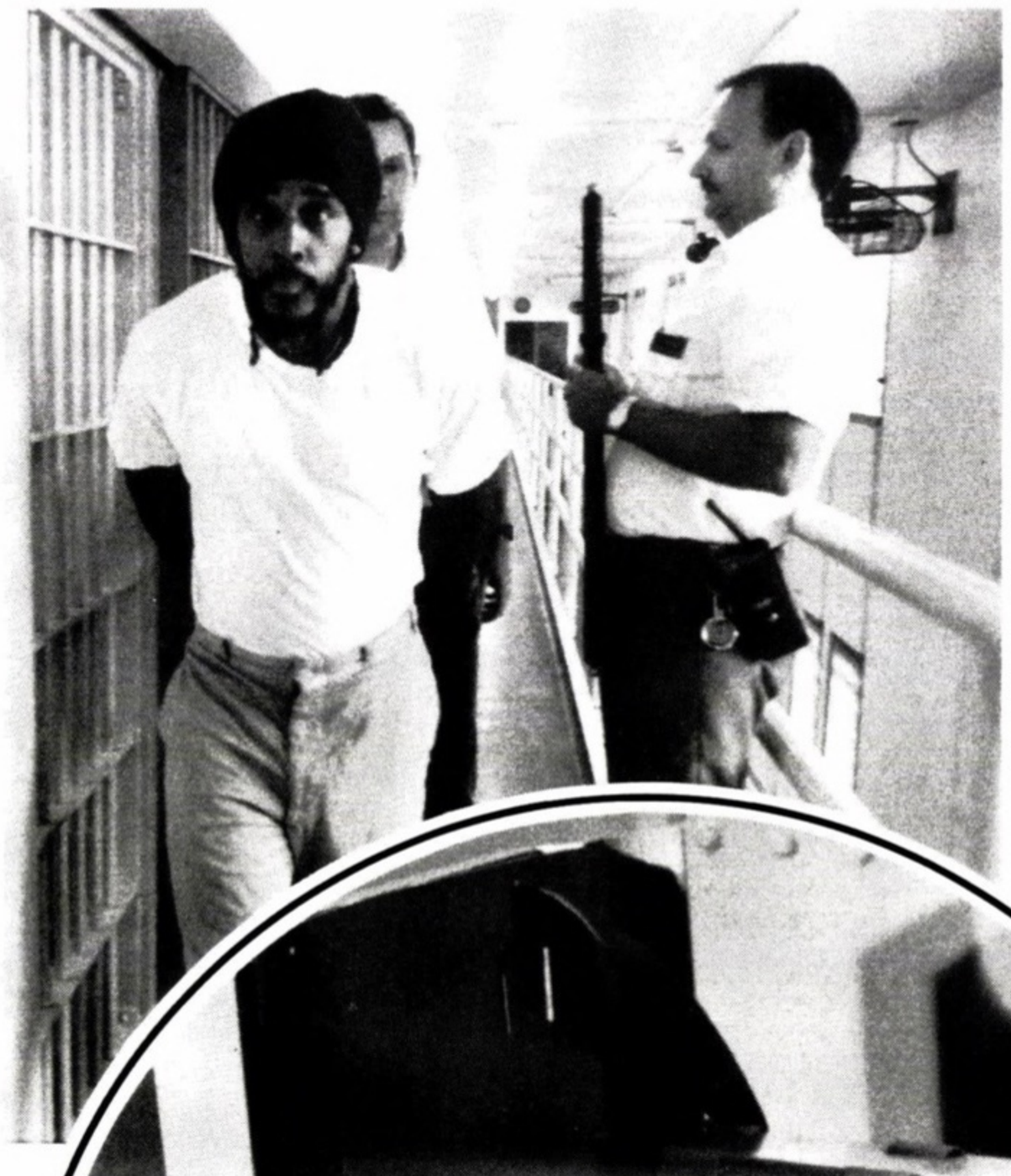
SUSAN MEISELAS / MAGNUM

TIME: Just before dawn, 14 December 1990. Place: New York State's Shawangunk Correctional Facility. Two Puerto Rican prisoners, Edwardo Marquez and Ramon Diaz are sleeping in their cell when five 'correction' officers and a sergeant burst in. They haul Diaz from his bed. Strip him. Shackle his legs. Handcuff his arms and force them high above his back. Jab him with batons. Kick. Hit. Punch. Reduce his body to a heaving, weeping heap of lacerations, bruises and humiliated despair.

Marquez watches in horror as the officers haul Diaz out of the cell before returning for him in riot gear: helmets, vests and billy clubs. They beat him viciously. Shackle and handcuff him. March him off slapping and shoving him down the stairs. In solitary they strip-frisk him. While he is naked they ram their batons into him.

This is no piece of fiction. The two prisoners are currently suing their alleged assailants for over $7,000,000 million in civil rights damages.

Many more prisoners however have no chance to do this. For although the US liberal democracy holds individual freedoms as supreme, inside prison walls individuals are stripped of their civil rights and left clinging to a few international treaties that are all but impossible to enforce from inside a cell.



SUSAN MEISELAS / MAGNUM

WAYNE MILLER / MAGNUM

A heavy hand: the US executed 23 prisoners in 1990 and by the end of that year more than 2,300 people were under sentence of death.

Brutality is inherent in the US prison system. Most of the one million or more people who are incarcerated are already victims of poverty, poor education and miserable housing. One half of one per cent of the US population are behind bars – a bigger proportion than in any other nation. And an inordinate number are black and male: close to half of all black men in the nation's capital see the inside of a prison before they reach 24.

Once inside, violence takes many forms. The death sentence is being applied to ever more cases – even for crimes where no victim is involved. According to Amnesty International the US has executed more juveniles than any other country except Iraq and Iran, while more US youths currently await execution for crimes committed when they were under 18 than in any other country.

The 'punishments' administered frequently amount to nothing less than torture – as with the beatings which are commonplace in US high-security prisons, according to one study and many prisoners' allegations. Speaking from personal experience, Dhoruba Bin Wahad – who spent 19 years in prison before an appeal found him innocent – said that the famous uprising in Attica State Correctional Facility, in which 43 inmates died, was precipitated by officers who were members of the Ku Klux Klan and participated in weekly beatings of the people in their charge.

Many forms of brutality abound in the US penal system. Beatings of prisoners are routine during cell transfers. Rectal probes are said to be used to intimidate and 'rape' prisoners moved out of certain high-security jails. While 'loss of privileges', including the right to visitors, can take a terrible toll on an inmate who has been counting the days to a family visit. When these punishments happen arbitrarily it is no wonder that prisoners lose what little respect they had for authority.

But of all the penalties levied in the penal colony, solitary confinement is both the most popular form of psychological abuse allowed by the US prison system – and the most devastating.

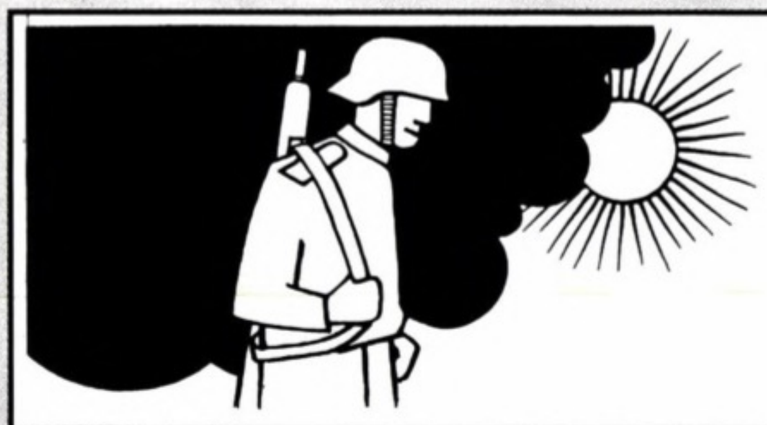
Locked up alone in cement cells 12 feet by 6, and allowed to walk freely for only 60 minutes a day, prisoners suffer many terrors, including breathlessness, panic, dread of impending death and hallucinations. They fantasize about taking revenge on prison guards by torturing and mutilating them. What chance does such a person have of coming out of prison unscarred, or of fitting back into 'normal' society?

At the US Penitentiary in Marion, Illinois, the institution's entire population is 'locked down' in indefinite solitary confinement and has been since two guards were killed in a uprising on 27 October 1983.

According to prisoners, the 'lock down' itself was an exercise in brutality imposed by the 'Special Operations Response Team' which was trained in forced-cell moves and was brought in to transfer prisoners to the control centre. The team did so wearing masks, no form of identification and wielding three-foot clubs with steel beads on the end.

Prisoners claimed they were beaten, usually while handcuffed. But a US magistrate later ruled that there had been no constitutional violation of prisoners' rights. He based the decision primarily on his finding that prisoners' testimony was not credible, and partly on the testimony of a prison warden who argued that the use of force was reasonable because 'No-one was taken to the hospital'. ■

Matthew Reiss is a New York-based freelance writer who specializes in human-rights issues.



NI MEDALS

GOLD **CHILE**
SILVER **HUNGARY**
BRONZE **CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

NI VOTES OF CENSURE

1 **SUDAN**
2 **BURMA (MYANMAR)**
3 **UNITED STATES**

THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM STATE VIOLENCE

All too often it is the state, which should be the guarantor of human rights, which itself inflicts violence upon its citizens. But the last decade has seen many states adopt a new respect for human rights.

MEDAL WINNERS

Not so long ago, **Chile** was the most infamous offender in the realm of state violence. But a newly-elected government is changing all that. As well as establishing the truth about human-rights violations over the 16 years of military rule, it plans reforms to guarantee the right to a fair trial, and to eliminate the death penalty. Many political prisoners have been pardoned.

In **Hungary** the death penalty was abolished on 24 October 1990 as an unconstitutional violation of human rights. All political prisoners have been released and people can now opt for civilian instead of military service. Conscientious objection is now recognized.

Czechoslovakia abolished the death penalty in May.1990. Critics of the regime have been released. And, in the June general election, former prisoner of conscience Vaclav Havel was elected president. Since then the legal system and the constitution have been completely reviewed to meet human-rights standards. A civilian alternative to military service has also been introduced.here.

VOTES OF CENSURE

Hundreds of government opponents have been imprisoned in **Sudan**, including many trade unionists who were tortured in unofficial detention camps called 'ghost houses'. Flogging and amputation are official punishments for crimes like robbery. People convicted of demonstrating against the Government are often flogged, as are those guilty of alcohol and sex-related offences. In 1990 30 army officers were executed after unfair trials, while Government troops committed dozens of summary executions.

Burma (Myanmar)'s record on state violence has been appalling ever since 3,000 democracy campaigners were killed by government forces in 1988. There have been many reports since of summary executions, beatings and torture of political prisoners, Muslims and suspected rebels. Because access to the country is so limited, information on what is happening has to be gained from refugees.

Although the **United States of America** is not in the same league as countries like Sudan and Burma when it comes to human-rights violations, its level of state violence is unacceptably high. After years when the death penalty was not used, capital punishment has again become routine. The US has executed 90 juveniles since the 1970s which, according to Amnesty International, is more than any other country except Iraq and Iran. Most were aged 15 to 17 when they committed their crimes and came from seriously deprived homes.

Sources: *Amnesty International Reports*, 1988-91; *Human Rights Watch Report*, 1990; *The Guardian*, 9.10.91; consultations with experts in the field.

JEAN-CLAUDE FRANCOLON / GAMMA

ACTION DIRECTORY

Useful addresses:

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND
Council for International Development, PO Box 24-003, Wellington. Tel: (04) 4726-375. *Amnesty International*, PO Box 793, Wellington. Tel: 04 499-3349.

AUSTRALIA
Committee to Defend Black Rights, 195 George St, Redfern, NSW 2016. Tel: (02) 698-9826, offices in most states. *Amnesty International*, 134 Broadway, Sydney, NSW 2000. Tel: (02) 281-4188, offices in all states. *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission*, 388 George St, Sydney, NSW 2000. Tel: (02) 229-7600, offices in all states.

CANADA
Amnesty International, 130 Slater St, State 900, Ottawa, Ontario. Tel: (613) 563-1891. *Canadian Civil Liberties Association*, 229 Yonge St, State 403, Toronto, Ontario, MSB 1N9. Tel: (416) 363-0321. *International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development*, 63 Rue de Bresoles, Montreal, Quebec H2Y 1V7. Tel: (514) 283-6073. *Canadian Council on Social Development*, 55 Parkdale, Box 3505, Station C, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4G1. Tel: (613) 728-1865.

RAISSA PAGE / FORMAT

UNITED KINGDOM
Amnesty International, 99-119 Rosebery Ave, London EC1R 4RE. Tel: (071) 278-6000. *Rights and Humanity*, 65 Swinton St, London WC1X 9NT. Tel: (071) 837-4188. *Minority Rights Group*, 379 Brixton Rd, London SW9 7DE. Tel: (071) 978-9498. *Article 19* (Tel: 071-403-4822), *Africa Watch* (Tel: 071-378-8008) and *Index on Censorship* (Tel: O71-359-0161) can all be found at the same address: 90 Borough High St, London SE1 1LL. *Survival International*, 310 Edgware Road, London W2. Tel: (071) 723-5535.

UNITED STATES
Groups with an international focus: *Amnesty International*, 322 8th Ave, New York, NY 10001. Tel: (212) 807-8400. *Human Rights Watch*, 485 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10017-6104. Tel: (212) 972-8400. (Also the head office for Asia Watch, Africa Watch, Middle East Watch, Americas Watch, Helsinki Watch and Fund for Free Expression). Groups focusing on the US: *American Civil Liberties Union*, 132 West 43rd St, New York, NY 10036. Tel: (212) 944-9800. *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*, 4805 Mount Drive, Baltimore, Maryland 21215. Tel: (410) 358-8900.

TIBET

The murmurs grow louder

Campaign for independence continues

TIBET, one of the last outposts of colonialism, is once again stirring for independence from China. Many Tibetans believe that with the end of the distractions of the Cold War their cause may be better understood internationally. To this end Tibet's spiritual and political leader, the Dalai Lama, has over the last two years met and sought support from a variety of political leaders including the leaders of the US, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Ireland, the UK and the Baltic states. No doubt he was helped in these initiatives by receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

For 40 years, most of them in exile, the Dalai Lama has been fighting for his country, which is as big as Western Europe. Bordering two Asian giants in the Himalayas, Tibet had enjoyed centuries of independence. It was a peaceful Buddhist state where most lived locked into a feudal society with the Dalai Lama's word as law.

The Chinese revolution of 1949 changed all that: Communist troops occupied the country in 1950. Initially the Dalai Lama worked with the Chinese authorities but after an uprising in March 1959 when thousands of Tibetans were killed, he escaped to asylum in India. There a government in exile was established, dealing first and foremost with the 120,000 Tibetan refugees who followed.

The Chinese saw the country as feudal, anachronistic and unexploited. Their word for Tibet indeed, means 'Western storehouse'. Under their occupation more than 6000 Buddhist monasteries – the cultural and spiritual backbone of the country – were destroyed. Hunting, which had formerly been prohibited (Buddhists revere all life), became obligatory. Monks and children were given quotas of 'unnecessary' birds, animals and insects to kill: if they failed to produce the evidence, legs or wings, they were beaten. Soldiers killed cats and dogs on sight, because they were 'parasitic'. During the Cultural Revolution 250,000 walnut trees were felled after being declared élitist.

Last year China announced 'the third wave of construction' in Tibet: exploiting vast new oil and chromite reserves and extracting hydro-electric power from one of Tibet's four sacred lakes. Some 7.5 million Chinese are said to have been resettled in the country of six million Tibetans.

Today foreign attention is being focussed again on Tibet, perhaps shamed by the comparison with Kuwait – where the international community was prepared to go to war over one country's annexation by another. So in August 1991 the UN Commission on Human Rights expressed concern over 'violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms that threaten... the Tibetan people'; while the US Congress declared Tibet 'an occupied country'. ■

Daya Kishan Thussu/Gemini

Beams and motes

America is the champion of free and (above all) fair trade. Yet it allows in a maximum of 35,292 brassieres from Mexico and no more than 350 tons of alloy steel from Poland. Congress has enacted over 8,000 different taxes and tariffs on imports. The Commerce Department labels imports 'dumped' (artificially cheap) if they sell for as little as 0.5 per cent less in the US than in foreign markets. But most of the affected goods come from Third World countries where floating exchange rates make these calculations meaningless.

The Department also insists that foreign companies make at least eight percent profit on their exports: in 1989 13 of America's 15 largest companies failed to meet this test themselves. The Institute for International Economics claims that the average American family pays an extra $1,200 a year in needlessly high prices because of import protection barriers.

Source: The Economist, Vol 321 No 7736, 1991

Zionism is no longer racism

It's official. At the end of last year, 16 December, the United Nations General Assembly repealed the resolution it passed in 1975 condemning Zionism – the belief that Jews should have a homeland in Palestine – as a form of racism and a threat to world peace. The vote passed with 111 in favour, 25 against, 13 abstentions and 17 not taking part. The US led the campaign for the repeal of the offending resolution. In 1975 72 countries voted in favour of the anti-Zionist resolution and 35 against with 32 abstentions. This time 29 countries joined the Soviet Union in changing their minds.

Source: The Economist, Vol 321 No 7738, 1991

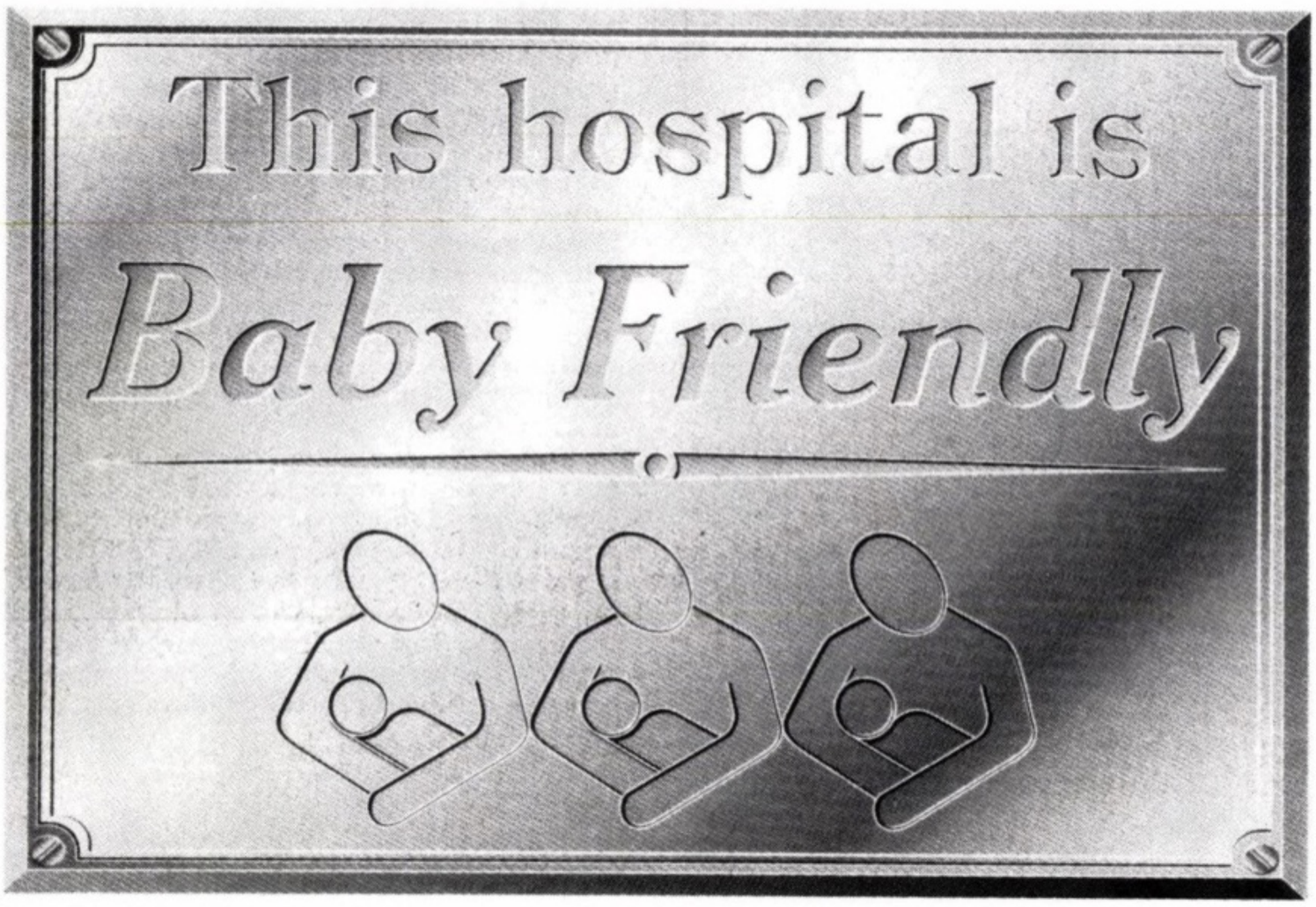
Yanomami triumph

President Collor of Brazil has announced the demarcation of 94,000 square kilometres of the northern Amazon rainforest as Yanomami territory. This represents an astonishing and largely unexpected victory in the long campaign both inside and outside Brazil to create a Yanomami Park. But critical issues such as the release of funds to demarcate and protect the park remain to be settled. The Yanomami peoples, the largest remaining indigenous group in the Amazon, have been threatened with extinction since invasions of their lands by the military and gold diggers began 17 years ago.

SOURCE: Survival International / Comissão pela criacão do Parque Yanomami – São Paulo

PETER FREY / SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL

BABYFOODS



This plaque saves lives

Low key, common sense, baby friendly

IF concern about increasing bottle-feeding of babies in the Third World is to go beyond multinational corporation bashing, then positive initiatives are required. The Nestlé boycott 'till they change their ways' goes some of the way. But how to persuade hospitals to get rid of the babyfood companies' presence in the all-important first few days after birth, when mothers first begin to nurse their babies? Here is a low-key but thoroughly common sense initiative just launched by the UN.

It is based on the fact that more than a million children's lives could be saved every year if all mothers gave their babies nothing but breastmilk for the first four to six months of life.

UNICEF and WHO have drawn up a code of practice for all maternity units. All hospitals following the 'Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding' will be designated as 'baby-friendly'. The ten steps?

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy – routinely communicated to all health staff.

2. Train all health staff to implement this policy.

3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.

4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within half an hour of birth.

5. Show mothers how to breastfeed, and how to maintain lactation even if they are separated from their infants.

6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breastmilk, unless *medically* indicated.

7. Practise rooming-in (mothers and children to remain together) 24 hours a day.

8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.

9. Give no artificial teats or pacifiers (also called dummies or soothers) to breastfeeding infants.

10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic. ■

The State of the World's Children 1992 Press Kit

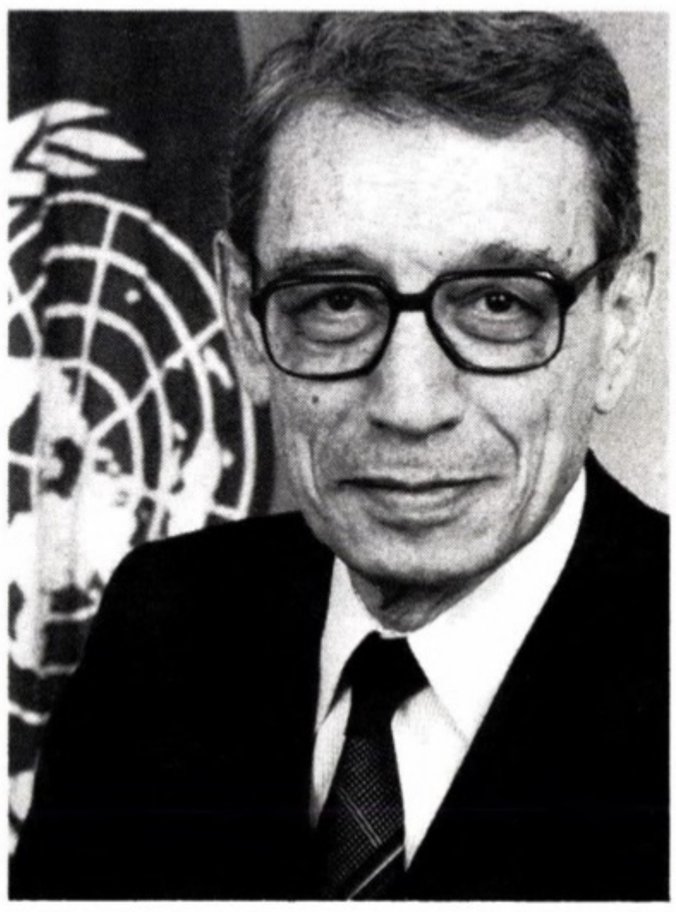
CARTOON : STEVE BELL/OXFAM

This cartoon comes from ***Oxfam's 50th Anniversary Launch Press Kit*** *containing 'A Fairer World Report', statistics, feature articles as well as cartoons.*

Hi! First citizen

If the United Nations represents the world, then the Secretary General is the world's first citizen. So welcome to the new incumbent, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Egypt's Foreign Minister. Boutros-Ghali was chosen because he was from the Third World; France and China had promised to veto someone from the North. He is from Africa and there was strong sentiment from the non-aligned countries that it was Africa's turn for the portfolio. And the US had decided that this was as far as it could go.

Will Boutros-Ghali distinguish himself from his predecessor? A start would be if he could persuade Washington to pay UN dues of more than $485 million owing for years. As it is, his main field of expertise is Africa, where he helped to mediate conflicts in Western Sahara and Liberia on behalf of the Organisation of African Unity. He also accompanied Anwar al Sadat to Camp David. He is a supporter of the privatization wing of Egypt's ruling National Democratic Party. At 68 and in ill health, he is expected to serve only one term.



M GRANT/ UN PHOTOS

Source: The Nation, Vol 253, No 21 1991

Battle plan for the killer industry

Over this last decade there has been a 36-per-cent decline in smoking among US adults. A leaked confidential memo written by executives of the tobacco industry outlines the latest strategy to combat anti-smoking regulations. Rather than flatly opposing all laws, the industry has a new plan to encourage US states to adopt loosely written laws which pre-empt cities from passing tough anti-smoking ordinances. The memo shows how the anti-smoking battle is shifting from Congress to states and cities.

For such a strategy the tobacco lobbyists need to find political support. Indeed political action committees supported by tobacco interests contribute big money to the election campaigns of preferred candidates. The industry gave more than $7.3 million to California state politicians between 1986 and 1990.

Source: Consumer Currents, No 141 1991

RAINFORESTS

Selling off a birthright

Exploitation of the Mosquito Coast

An astonishing deal struck by the Honduran government will give the US-based Stone Container Corporation the right to exploit the unique wilderness forests of the Mosquito Coast on the Caribbean Sea for the next 40 years. The deal threatens untold ecological damage and the extinction of the region's indigenous peoples.

In best Honduran tradition the details of the deal have been kept tightly under wraps. But it is known to involve some 28,000 square kilometres of an area which covers a biosphere reserve designated by the UN, including pristine, uncharted rainforest, unique mixed tropical pine forests, wetlands, salt and fresh water lagoons, a sandy coastline and nearby coral reefs.

The Honduran government has guaranteed to provide Stone, a paper and packaging giant ranked 92nd in the Fortune 500 list of the biggest US companies, with infrastructure and energy. Once opened up by roads the region will inevitably act as a magnet for wealthy ranchers and land-hungry peasants. Oil and chemical waste companies have also been showing keen interest in the region. Biology professor Mirna Marin at Honduras University believes the region could yield, over time and without being destroyed, ten times the value of its timber.

Misquitia is also home to groups of indigenous peoples, including Misquito, Tawahka, Pech – and the Garifuna, who are descendants of slaves. The largest group, the Misquito, have mixed with Spanish, Caribbean and even English peoples but they retain a powerful cultural identity based on the Misquito language. Further inland just 1,000 remain of the Tawahka people. One of the proposed roads cuts right through their territory. Over the border in Nicaragua the Contra war long ago destroyed both the environment and culture of 20,000 Tawahka people. Deals are also being done between the Nicaraguan government and Taiwanese business interests to cut down the Nicaraguan 'Mosquito Coast' forests.

Mirna Marin believes that while the US government promotes environmental concerns by the use of conditional loans, US companies coming in through the back door are doing their best to destroy the Honduran environment. 'The US destroys with its feet what it builds with its hands,' she says.

The departmental name given to the Mosquito coast is *Gracias a Dios* ('Thanks be to God'). Columbus, on first sighting the Honduran coast, is said to have exclaimed: 'Thanks be to God we are clear of the depths.' The Indians and wildlife of the Mosquito coast are doubtless wondering quite what it is they have to thank God for. ■

Chris Philipsborn

Shoot-up in the game parks

Widespread killing of animals in Ugandan game parks by soldiers and guerillas is jeopardising government attempts to regenerate the parks after the ruin of years of civil war. Worst affected is Murchison Falls. Army detachments shoot at anything they see and sell the meat, mainly hippo, to surrounding villages. Soldiers have also stolen road-making machinery and other park equipment. In fact army harassment was the reason for the European Community suspension of two park rehabilitation projects. Mgahinga Park in Uganda's south west is occupied by the Rwandese Patriotic Army opposed to Rwanda's President Habyalimana. Gorillas and elephants are among their prey, while in Kidepo Park in the north-west, giraffes are on the run from members of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, which opposes the Khartoum government. Giraffe numbers have fallen from perhaps 80 in 1984 to about five.

Source: Henry Wasswa/Panos Briefs

END

Quote

"There is no lasting substitute for a profound and painful commitment at home to reconstitute our societies, to reform our political systems and to restructure our economies ...

"Sovereignty was indeed wrested from us as a people. That fact is rooted in our history. Equally undeniable however, is the fact that with the act of recovering that sovereignty ... African leadership in general did not give much thought to the logic and justice of reinvesting that sovereignty in its peoples.

"Democracy is not only an attractive option but a rational and inevitable one. This is one act of our internal reparations which leadership on this continent can no longer evade."

Address by General Babangida,
President of Nigeria at the
Organisation of African Unity Conference,
1991.

Nut price problems

Brazil nuts were too cheap last Christmas, with repercussions for the survival of the Amazonian rainforest. The collapse in prices means that the nut gatherers will have to resort to slash-and-burn farming to survive.

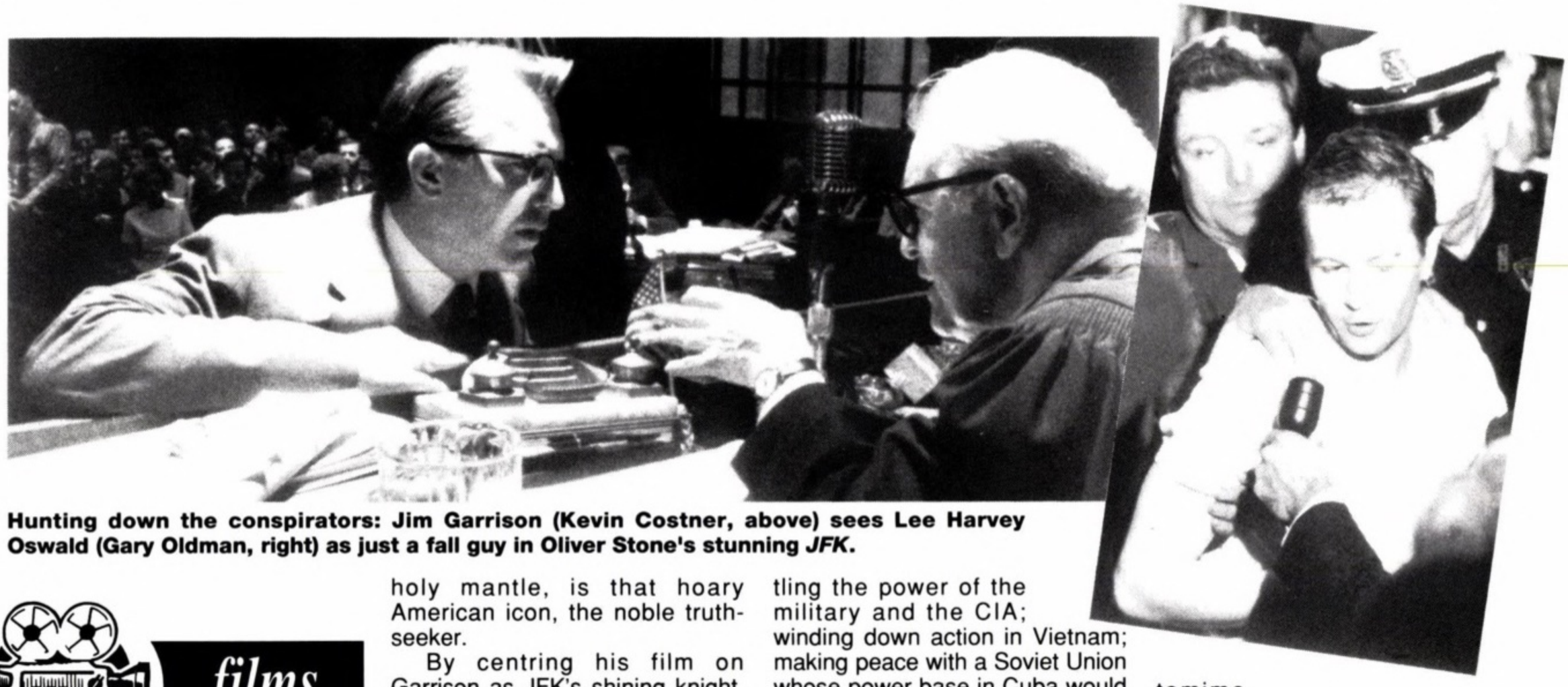
The trees which grow the nuts are found only in unspoilt rainforest, and gathering the nuts is an environmentally friendly way of exploiting the forest.

While the usual price for nuts was about $1.20 a pound, it is now about $0.80 because of the recession in the West – and because of the disastrous crop the previous year, which caused the export of poorer-quality nuts to make up the shortfall. Shoppers remembered just how sour were the previous year's nuts and failed to buy them.

Shippers are refusing to advance credit, and *castanheiros* are having to look for other ways to make ends meet. Most of them have small clearings in the forest and keep a few cattle. Without any income from the nuts, the logic must be to clear more forest to farm.

Source: New Scientist, No 1800/1801 1991

MIRIAM MCCURDY



Hunting down the conspirators: Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner, above) sees Lee Harvey Oswald (Gary Oldman, right) as just a fall guy in Oliver Stone's stunning *JFK*.

films

JFK

directed by **Oliver Stone**

In *JFK* Oliver Stone seems to have done the impossible and made a genuinely naive conspiracy thriller. It is naive in a way that paranoid political films have rarely been, and views the Kennedy assassination with wide eyes, as if to say 'Can such things *really* happen in America?' In a sense it's a necessary tactic, since Stone is bringing events that traumatized a generation to a younger audience that may not be aware of them.

But the film is not so much about the events of 22 November 1963 as about their background, and about the investigation undertaken by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison (played by Kevin Costner). Garrison was convinced that the Warren Commission report, pointing to Lee Harvey Oswald as the sole culprit, was a cover-up.

Stone has called his film 'an alternative myth to the Warren Commission' and quite clearly it is a fictional construct. But it highlights the danger of docu-dramas, which can present themselves as a kind of higher truth. If a fiction tells us we've been lied to, we all too readily accept its own proposals as gospel. Because so many shady operators lie to him, Costner's Garrison must surely be the repository of truth, and so by extension must the film. More than a pinch of salt is required here.

The film is equally naive about Kennedy himself, portrayed unequivocally as a martyr who would have redeemed America if only he'd been allowed to – his questionable role in the disastrous assault on Cuba is glossed over. Garrison, who takes on his holy mantle, is that hoary American icon, the noble truth-seeker.

By centring his film on Garrison as JFK's shining knight, Stone confronts two models of history – the conspiracy theory, in which truth can never be known, because all 'facts' are fabricated by a cabal, and the 'Great Man' theory in which one outstanding figure makes events happen. However complex the plot against JFK is, in the end everything is reduced to a battle between good and evil – or, in classic Hollywood terms, the little guy versus the system. This is a political film only in the most superficial way.

The revelations themselves have long been fodder for speculation, and are drawn here from books on the case by Jim Marrs and by Garrison himself. The gist is that Oswald was the stooge set up by the CIA as a made-to-measure decoy, and that Kennedy was removed by his own administration, who were afraid of the moves he was making: dismantling the power of the military and the CIA; winding down action in Vietnam; making peace with a Soviet Union whose power base in Cuba would go unchallenged; supporting civil rights. The assassination itself appears as a viscerally edited continuous replay of newsreel and recreated footage, obsessively scanning what an awestruck Garrison refers to as 'the secret murder at the heart of the American Dream'.

As in *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*, Stone is playing psychoanalyst to US history, exorcising the traumas of the 1960s. The film ends with the reminder that the real facts will not be released until next century, and that it's up to the next generation to find out the truth. Costner's closing challenge to posterity is irresistible rhetoric even if it covers up the film's own equivocations.

This film is not what it seems, but then the transparency of its rhetoric tells you that from the start. This is history as pantomime, but staged so vigorously and compellingly that you're transfixed throughout. Simply as a catalyst for heated controversy, it's an extraordinary piece of work.

Politics ☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆

books

Theology and Feminism

by **Daphne Hampson** *(Blackwell)*

Once a champion of women's ordination in the Anglican Church, and still a theologian, Daphne Hampson now calls her-

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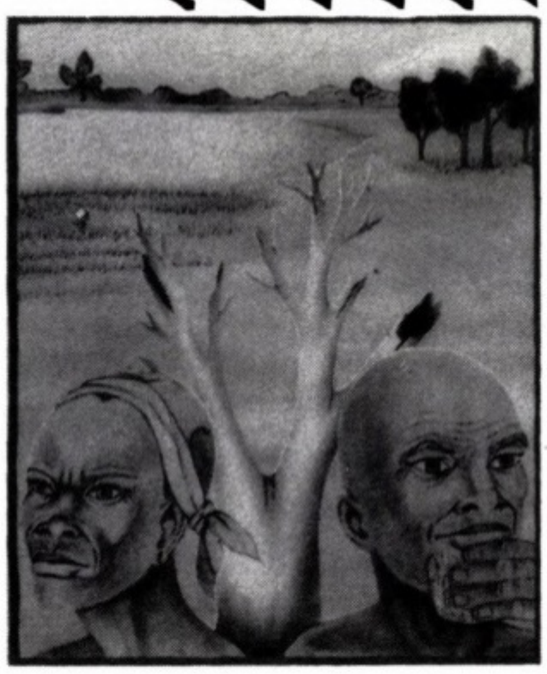
'People's attitude towards** marriage has completely changed. In my day you could offer your daughter in marriage to anyone you liked. It was your choice, not hers. Today if you were to offer your daughter to someone she did not like, without her consent, you could rest assured that sooner or later she will cause you problems.'* ***70-year-old Wakary Gassama, from Bakel in Senegal.

'We have seen many changes in recent years. The winds have grown very strong because of all the wide open spaces. There are no trees or tall grasses to block its passage. The disappearance of the vegetation has also produced hotter weather and relentless sunshine. There are no wild animals any more. If you want to see a gazelle, a deer or an ostrich you now have to travel at least 40 kilometres. When I was young you could go seven kilometres and you would see a lion.' ***92-year-old Harouna Ouédraogo, from Ouahigouya in Burkina Faso.***



'The number of people in Sudan moving to urban areas astonishes me. Urbanization is largely caused by people moving away to be educated. Rural people are saying that a person without education is like an animal without a skin. My sons and daughters all go to school. I don't want them to be ignorant like me and their mother. If we were given a letter saying "kill him", we would carry it to our murderer, because we are uneducated.' ***60-year-old Girmay Gebray, from Wad el Hileau in Sudan.***

Just three of the hundreds of people contributing their own memories to **At the Desert's Edge**, a collection of oral histories from the Sahel, edited by Nigel Cross and Rhiannon Barker and published by Panos/SOS Sahel, London UK.

self a 'post-Christian feminist'. Her analysis of Old and New Testaments shows the 'thoroughly sexist character of Christianity' and the story of her own unsuccessful struggle with the Church makes the same point.

She repeatedly notes the crucial parallel between sexism and racism, quoting Desmond Tutu as the only Anglican bishop at the 1978 Lambeth Conference on the ordination of women who seemed to grasp how women felt about the issue under debate: 'A child of God subjected to that kind of treatment actually gets to doubt that he is, or she is, a child of God'.

Hampson's critique is based on a first-hand experience of how patriarchy has wounded women. She takes issue with feminist theologians who try to square their Christian faith with their feminism, and the detail of these passages, together with the moving autobiographical anecdotes she tells to illustrate her insights, form the main substance of the book.

However, while Hampson has rejected the Church (or was it the other way round?), she has kept her faith, though it has now become much harder to name and to symbolize. The problem of finding ways to express our spiritual life without resort to patriarchal religious language is one she shares with many people these days.

She describes many attempts to re-establish new rituals and mythologies, and shows her sympathy with these efforts, though she seems to shrink from participating fully. In fact she is no trendy radical or New Ager but a soberly reflecting academic, and this is what makes her book unique in its radicalism.

The outraged sense of justice that impels her argument has an ironically prophetic ring (and, like the prophets, Hampson has suffered ostracism and character assassination on account of her stand).

It is not often that we see Christianity confronted head-on and from within – in its claims to represent a force for good in the world. If it's true that 'it takes your own to level you', perhaps the passion of this disillusioned activist will have some lasting effect.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews editor: **Chris Brazier**

THE *classic*

The Clash

... being the record that put the politics into punk

It's hard for me to credit, but we're now farther away from the summer of punk than those heady months were from Beatlemania. Back in 1976 it seemed like eons had passed since the last great youth-culture explosion – its veterans, from Dylan and Lennon downwards into the ranks of mere mortals, seemed past it, tired and devoid of ideas. But then I only have to look at what I wrote about punk at the time to realize just how long ago it was.

'Grey – that's all I see. People as machine junkies, mainlining materialism. As we stagger into the first great post-War Depression the drab monotony of existence is going to grab you by the throat – there's no affluence to distort the truth into pretty shapes any more...'

I was 21 – and actually a bit ashamed of not being a teenager any more. And I was staking my claim for a job as a rock writer with a set-piece article in *Melody Maker*, the UK's oldest pop-music paper. I'd spent the summer of '76 following the Sex Pistols, the Clash, the Buzzcocks and the rest around the London clubs, knowing that I had happened upon something that happens only once in each generation, something equivalent to the Beatles in the Cavern Club or the Who up the Goldhawk Road. My own existence actually seemed anything but drab and monotonous.

But it wasn't my life I was talking about: it was the kids (in my head they were usually male, of course) who had nothing to look forward to but the dole queue or the dead-end job. These were the people the Clash cared about too. If punk had a visual backdrop it was the unforgettable picture conjured up in their song *London's Burning* of a boy running through the concrete wasteland of an inner-city housing estate, with cars racing around him and televisions mesmerizing the tower blocks above. *'Now I'm in the subway and I'm looking for the flat/ This one leads to this block, this one leads to that/ The wind howls through the empty block looking for a home/ But I run through the empty stone because I'm all alone.'*

The Clash, the 1977 debut album which contained these lines, was one of the first punk LPs and is still the greatest. It had a ferocious energy that had not been equalled for years – all the fresh enthusiasm of Presley's Sun sessions, of the early Stones or the Hamburg Beatles. Yet despite the determinedly rough edges ('the truth is only known by guttersnipes' were the record's last words) this was also well-crafted pop – especially when you compare it in hindsight with the inarticulate buzzsaw droning it was to inspire.

The Sex Pistols were bigger and more explosive – they transcended all categorization and their first three singles were of quite miraculous quality. But, *Anarchy in the UK* notwithstanding, the Clash were the political heart of punk, embodying the belief that this upsurge of youthful energy and frustration might be channelled into positive social change. *'All the power in the hands,'* they raged, *'of the people rich enough to buy it/ While we walk the streets, too chicken to even try it/ And everybody's doing just what they're told to...'*

From this vantage point, of course, the political stance seems emptier simply because we now know that punk as a social movement was going nowhere. I half knew it even at the time, when as a rock critic I would put hapless teenage musicians who were only interested in a bit of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll through an interrogation about their political position. But I felt I had to do all I could to guard the flame of punk as a political movement – even when the Clash's Mick Jones upbraided me for doing it.

Ultimately even I had to accept that punk was of purely musical importance – it caused none of the enduring social ripples that Sixties music had done. And the musicians at its epicentre resisted all attempts by pretentious commentators like me to make them into something more than they were – young people following a time-honoured path of escape from the dead-end expectations that **The Clash** evoked so eloquently.

The Clash as a group never quite recovered from the expectations thrust upon them. They made an excellent, eclectic album in *London Calling*, an outstanding reggae-rock single in *White Man in the Hammersmith Palais* (included, along with other early singles, on the CD version of the first album). Even their fifth LP, *Combat Rock*, had its moments, notably in Joe Strummer's haunting evocation of the plight of the Amerasian children US soldiers left behind in Vietnam after the war – a song I remembered when I actually met such children in Saigon.

But by then the band was disintegrating. I think the Clash probably knew deep down that they were doomed by their own origins, that they could never have a career as the new generation's Rolling Stones, still intact (if utterly uninteresting) after decades. They must have realized that the Pistols had the more appropriate end – gone as soon as they'd arrived, exploding like a bright star.

At least the Clash left a classic document behind. Their first album was the moment when the third rock'n'roll generation stood up to be counted. But in so far as it suggested revolution was on its way, how wrong can you be? The youth-led 'riot' the Clash called for actually happened in Britain in 1981 as unemployment soared under the first Thatcher government – but made not a dent in the iron-plated ascendancy of the New Right that lasted out the decade.

That's one irony. An even greater irony is that the Clash gained their first ever British Number One single last year, long after they had gone their separate ways – because Levis chose one of their songs (not even one of their best) for a TV ad. Revolt into style, indeed. ■

Chris Brazier

The Clash *(Columbia Records, 1977).*

QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. **Please address your answers and questions to 'curiosities'.**

Was Beethoven black?

● In addition to the sources quoted in **NI 228** there is a short piece about this by Steve Moore in the *Fortean Times No 59*, published in 1991. Anyone wanting a copy can probably get it from SKS, 20 Paul Street, Frome, BA11 1DX, UK.

Moore quotes a friend of Beethoven who described him as 'short, stocky, with broad shoulders, short neck, thick head, round nose, blackish, brown complexion'.

Moore's conclusion is that 'a Negro strain introduced by the Moorish invasion of Spain may have made its way to Limbourg' which is where Beethoven ancestors appear to have originated. So, although it is not likely that Beethoven was 100 per cent black, it is on the cards that he was not 100 per cent white either.

Steven Mainwaring, Bath, UK

Why do nomads in the Sahara wear dark colours when light colours are supposed to be cooler?

● I've heard a rumour that dark clothes create thermals which are rather more cooling than still air.

Jean Daly, Reading, UK

What are the origins of the Panama hat?

● The Panama hat was originally made in Panama and Ecuador from the leaves of the screw-pine tree about 300 years ago.

These hats are well suited to protect the wearer from the sun, and were worn for this reason by Jamaican and other workers building the Panama Canal.

David Dodman, Kingston, Jamaica

What was the Football War all about?

● The war was about more than football as suggested in Jane Bertram's reply (**NI 227**). The underlying cause for the war between El Salvador and Honduras was to do with the iniquities of the 1969 Central American Common Market which greatly favoured El Salvador in comparison with Honduras. The large number of Salvadorean refugees in Honduras also contributed to this war which was fought on both sides by soldiers equipped by the US.

Robert Graham, Darlington, Australia

QUESTIONS awaiting your answers:

What is the origin of the terms 'left-wing' and 'right-wing'? I have an idea that it dates back to the French Revolution. Is this so? Alan Hunter, Greymouth, Aotearoa

Where can vegetarians who want to be consistent get cruelty-free, quality shoes, belts and accesories? I've tried asking local vegetarian societies but have got useless replies. Raoul Boulakia, Toronto, Canada

How does a fly land on a ceiling? How does a fly take off from a ceiling? MT Gibbs, Kempston, UK

I've heard that someone has invented a car that runs off chicken manure. Is this true? June Keen, Perth, Australia

What happens to the fat extracted in the production of healthy 'low fat' margarine and dairy products? Chris Fincham, Colchester, Essex

If you have any questions please send them to **Curiosities, New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK**, or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).

INTERNATIONALST LABOUR OFFICE

Kingship

How rulers came to rule. A fable about power by ***Kit Garbett****.*

'GATHER round,' said the young man. 'Call the villagers and those in neighbouring villages too. I've got something to say.'

With some murmurs of 'I've got dinner to cook' and other murmurs of 'It sounds more interesting than cooking dinner', the villagers gathered round. The young man told them his idea.

'At the moment everybody does what they want, whenever they want as long as no-one else objects. If you, for example,' he indicated a red-haired villager, 'if you fancy fish you go fishing.'

'I don't like fish,' the villager said emphatically.

'Yes, but if you *did*, then you'd go fishing...'

'I've never liked fish. Too many bones...'

'OK, forget the fish. Take another example. If you fancied an apple, right...'

'Yes, I like apples. No bones. Pips and...'

'If you want apples,' the young man continued, 'You pick some in the forest, as you please. For the big decisions, though, that affect everyone, we all decide what to do, don't we?' He appealed to them. They all agreed.

ALAN HUGHES

'Now, I suggest that, instead of doing as we please, or having discussions, one person makes all the decisions. That will be me of course,' said the young man hastily. 'Everyone does what I say. It's a deal. I tell you what to do, in return you do what I say.'

They thought this over for a while. It seemed fair, though the details would have to be worked out.

'What things do we have to do?' someone asked brightly.

'Everything,' the young man replied. 'Everything I say. If I fancy some fruit, whoever I tell has to get some apples.'

'And if there's no apples, you get fish,' the red-haired villager contributed happily. He could see what he was getting at.

'Almost,' the young man agreed warily. His new subjects would need training. 'Now, listen carefully. I'll be in charge and called the King. OK?' There was a general nodding of heads. The King hurried on as the red-haired man opened his mouth. 'If any of you,' he pointed a regal finger, 'want an apple or anything, you ask my permission. If I say no, you can't. If I say yes, you can.'

'Let's see if this is right,' a tall villager began.

'Wait,' the King stopped him. 'Remember, you ask my permission before you do anything, so you have to ask my permission to speak, now go on.'

'Right, so...'

'No, I meant go on and ask permission to speak,' came the kingly rejoinder.

'I see,' the tall villager beamed. 'May I have permission to speak,' he petitioned.

'No,' commanded the King. The tall villager sat down.

The King had further commandments. 'Because I'm the King you do everything I say, and everything belongs to me. The fish in the river, the fruit on the trees, in fact the river, the trees, all the things on the land and everything I haven't thought of yet, all belong to me. You collect fruit, fish, wood, crops, animals. In return, I'll let you keep some for yourselves. You won't have to worry any more. That's fair enough isn't it?' The villagers nodded cautiously. It seemed reasonable enough; was there a catch in it?

'Permission to speak, King?' asked the tall villager.

The King nodded graciously.

'It's OK so far,' the tall villager continued. 'But what if I don't do as you say, or do something without asking permission? '

The King smiled sagely. 'That's easy. If you, or anyone else, disobeys my orders, then you, or whoever, will be killed. Quite messily. It's the simplest way. Any more questions?' The King smiled benevolently.

The tall villager was not satisfied. 'I don't...'

'Permission,' the King reminded him gently.

'Sorry, permission to speak please, King.'

'Good, good.' The King smiled at his subjects. 'You're getting it now. Permission granted,' he assented.

'Thank you, King,' the tall villager continued. 'This killing... I'm not sure about it. Will you do the killing yourself? After all, I am bigger than you'.

'Good, I like this. You're anticipating. You show promise. You'll be knight or something. I don't get involved in the killing,' the King explained. 'I order someone else to do it. Special people do the killing. They're what I'll call an army.'

'May the King have permission to tell us about armies?' asked another villager.

'Nearly right,' said the King magnanimously. 'I was going to tell you later. I shall need an army, of course. That's a lot of very strong men, called soldiers. The soldiers ensure that everyone obeys my orders. In return, the army protects you by fighting other armies. Of course, there aren't any other armies yet, but when they hear about us other people will copy us and have Kings and armies. Then we, or rather the soldiers, will fight them.'

'May I have the King's gracious permission to ask another question?' said the tall villager.

'Very good indeed. You'll be a duke or something – go ahead,' the King said, making a note to himself to keep an eye on the tall villager and have him beheaded at the first signs of competition.

'Pray, would the King tell us where he gets these noble soldiers?'

'That's the beauty of it,' said the King. 'Because you are all my subjects, I'll make the biggest of you soldiers. The rest work to support me and the army. In return, the army protects you from other armies and kings. Now that we've covered most things, the audience is closed. You have permission to leave. Except you,' he added, pointing to a beautiful maiden.

'It has its points, I suppose,' the red-haired villager muttered to the tall villager as they walked away. 'But there's too many bones...'

'"My Lord Duke"', replied the tall villager sharply. 'Call me "My Lord Duke", peasant!'

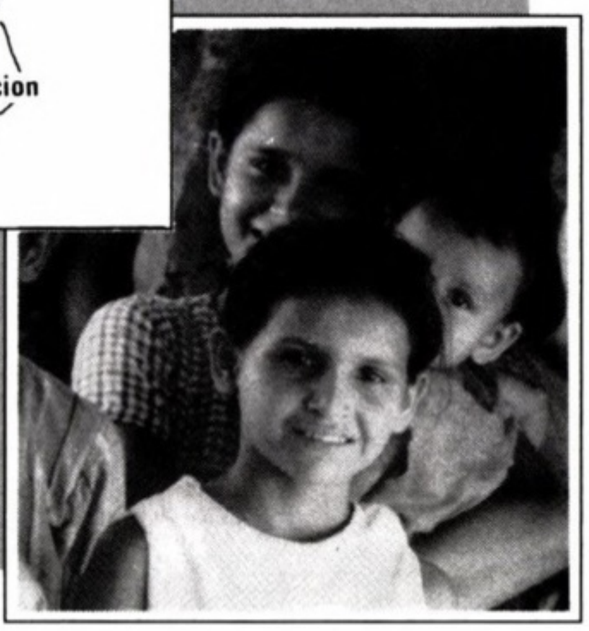
Kit Garbett lives, lectures and writes in the UK city of Leeds.

Paraguay

'AN island surrounded by land' is how Paraguay is sometimes described partly because it is one of the two land-locked countries in the western hemisphere (the other is Bolivia) – but also because of its distinctive history and politics.

Since independence from Spain in 1811, Paraguay has had long periods of authoritarian-personalised regimes and two major wars with its neighbours. In 1865, Paraguay found itself at war with Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. This 'War of the Triple Alliance' resulted in a genocide that reduced Paraguay's population from 450,000 to 220,000 by 1870. Sixty years later, a dispute over contested territory in the western region resulted in the Chaco War (1932-1935) against Bolivia.

General Alfredo Stroessner, the son of a German immigrant and a Guarani Indian, seized power in 1955 in a military coup. Stroessner's iron-fisted rule lasted for thirty-four years. The regime was characterised by institutionalised corruption and fraudulent elections where the General would be 're-elected' every five years by more than 90 per cent of the vote. In this period, 25 per cent of the population emigrated to neighbouring Argentina and Brazil. Paraguay became a backward and isolated country and safe haven for Nazi expatriates such as Dr Joseph Mengele. The quiet capital city of Asunción, officially declared 'Sister City' with South Africa's Pretoria, is known for its statues of Nicaraguan dictator Somoza and Avenues named after Spanish 'Generalisimo Franco'.



DAVID MANGURIAN/UNICEF

Paraguay's economic activity centres around agriculture and livestock. But land tenure presents one of the most unfair distributions in Latin America. Estates covering some 27 million hectares are owned by less than 2,000 *latifundistas* (landowners) while over 120,000 peasants occupy and work 1.9 million hectares – and 90 per cent of them have no titles to their land. The resulting deep-rooted conflict between peasants and landowners is one of the more explosive social problems in Paraguay.

The year of 1989 brought significant changes. In February, General Stroessner was deposed by fellow general Andrés Rodriguez, who promised to introduce democratic reforms. Three months later elections were held with the participation of most of the formerly banned political parties and General Rodriguez, supported by the Colorado Party, became the constitutional President with the support of 70 per cent of the vote. Freedom of the press and individual rights have been re-established. A Constituent Assembly elected at the end of 1991 will redraft the obsolete Stroessner Constitution.

While the country has embarked on the shaky road of transition to democracy, many still wonder whether the military-President will transfer his office to a freely-elected successor in 1993, or whether Rodriguez will follow in Stroessner's infamous steps and hang on to office.

Alfredo Forti

AT A glance

Excellent	★★★★★
Good	★★★★
Fair	★★★
Poor	★★
Appalling	★

POLITICS
Governing Colorado Party has excessive control over legislative and judiciary branches
1982

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★
Great inequality affects peasant population.
1982 ★★

LITERACY ★★★
81%. 68% enrolment in 1st and 2nd schooling levels.
1982: ★

SELF-RELIANCE ★★★
Self-sufficient in most foods but dependent on fuel and other imports.
1982 ★★

FREEDOM ★★★★
Most political prisoners freed after 1989.
1982: ★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★
Poor: conservative, male-dominated society. Women's right to vote came only in 1963.
1982 ★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★
67 years *(US 76 years)*
Severe public health problems in rural population.
1982 ★★★

Leader President General Andrés Rodriguez.
Economy GNP per capita US $1,030 *(US $20,910)*
Monetary unit: Guarani.
Main exports are cotton, oilseeds, soya and meat products.
People 4.3 million.
Health Infant mortality 41 per 1,000 live births *(US 9 per 1,000)*
Culture Most of the population is mestizo; about 5 per cent are Indians. Ninety-seven per cent are Roman Catholic. Spanish is the official language but most people speak Guarani.

Sources: *The State of the World's Children 1992, additional information supplied by author.*

Last profiled in June 1982

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VOICES FROM THE SOUTH
Poverty and the environment

In June world leaders gather in Rio de Janeiro for the UN's 'Earth Summit' on environment and development. Billed as the 'last chance to save the earth', it could turn out to be the last chance for rich countries in the North to stop pontificating and learn from the South. Will the North listen? Will the voices of the South be reported in the world's media? We think not – which is why we are devoting next month's **NI** to the view from the South.

Articles include:

- **The fridge, the greenhouse and the carbon sink**. Anil Agarwal takes a swipe at environmental imperialism.
- **Southern embraces**. The world – gentle and brutal – according to Eduardo Galeano.
- **Armada against Narmada**. The campaign against the Narmada Valley dams in India is hotting up; Medha Patkar is in the thick of it.
- **Talking garbage**. Recycling in Sri Lanka, by Lasanda Kurukulasuriya.

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Central Hall, Westminster

Jonathon Porritt
Mostafa Tolba
Rt Hon Neil Kinnock
Rt Hon Paddy Ashdown
Rt Hon Michael Heseltine*
Gro Harlem Brundtland*
Maurice Strong*
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Maneka Gandhi*
(*invited but yet to confirm)

Tickets: Waged £5/Unwaged £3

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